

QUANTUM

SCIENCE FICTION & FANTASY REVIEW

Summer 1990

No. 37

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Langford
*Fun With
Senseless Violence*

Poul
Anderson
People in SF

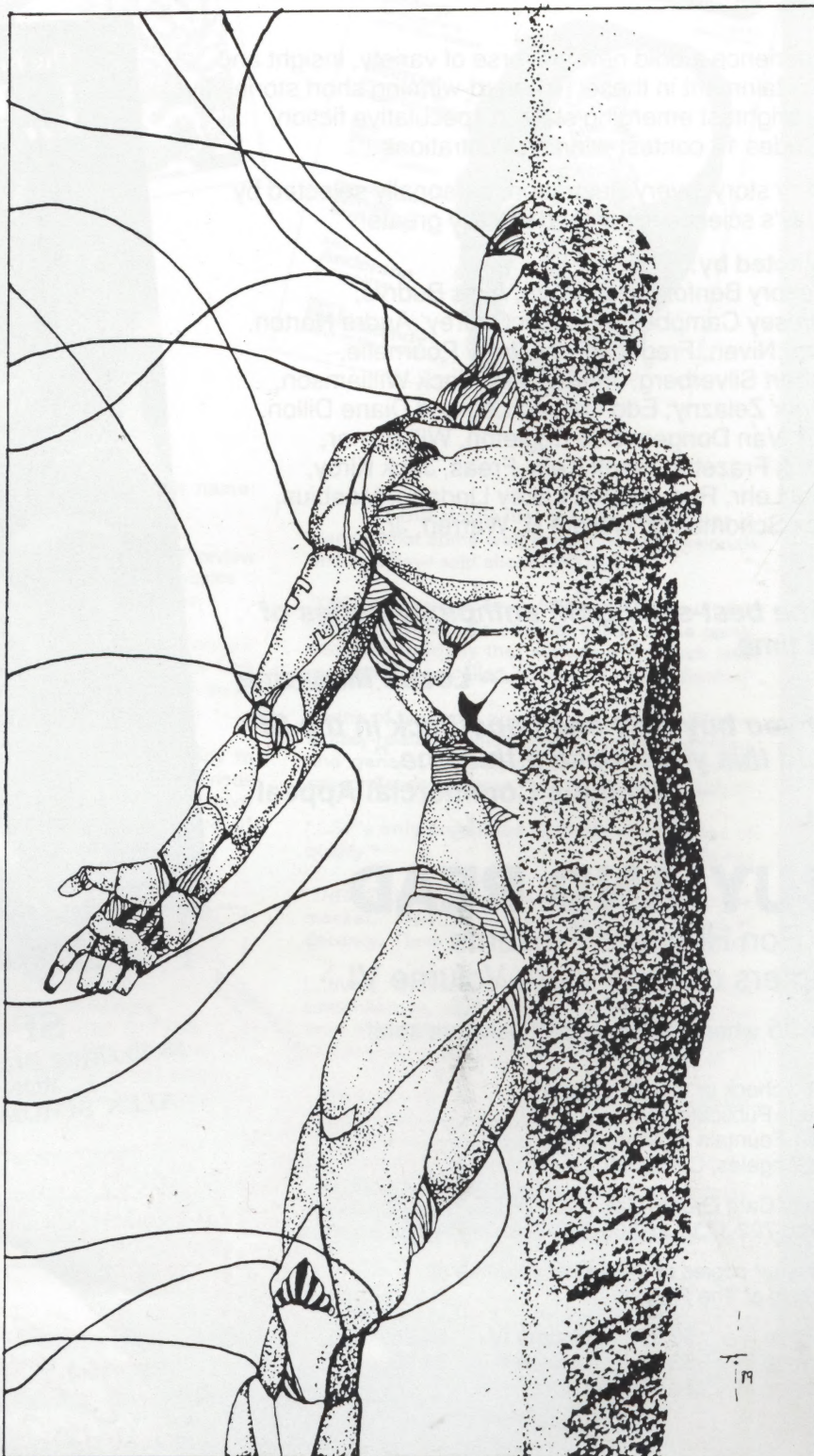
Michael G.
Coney
Interview

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on J. G. Ballard

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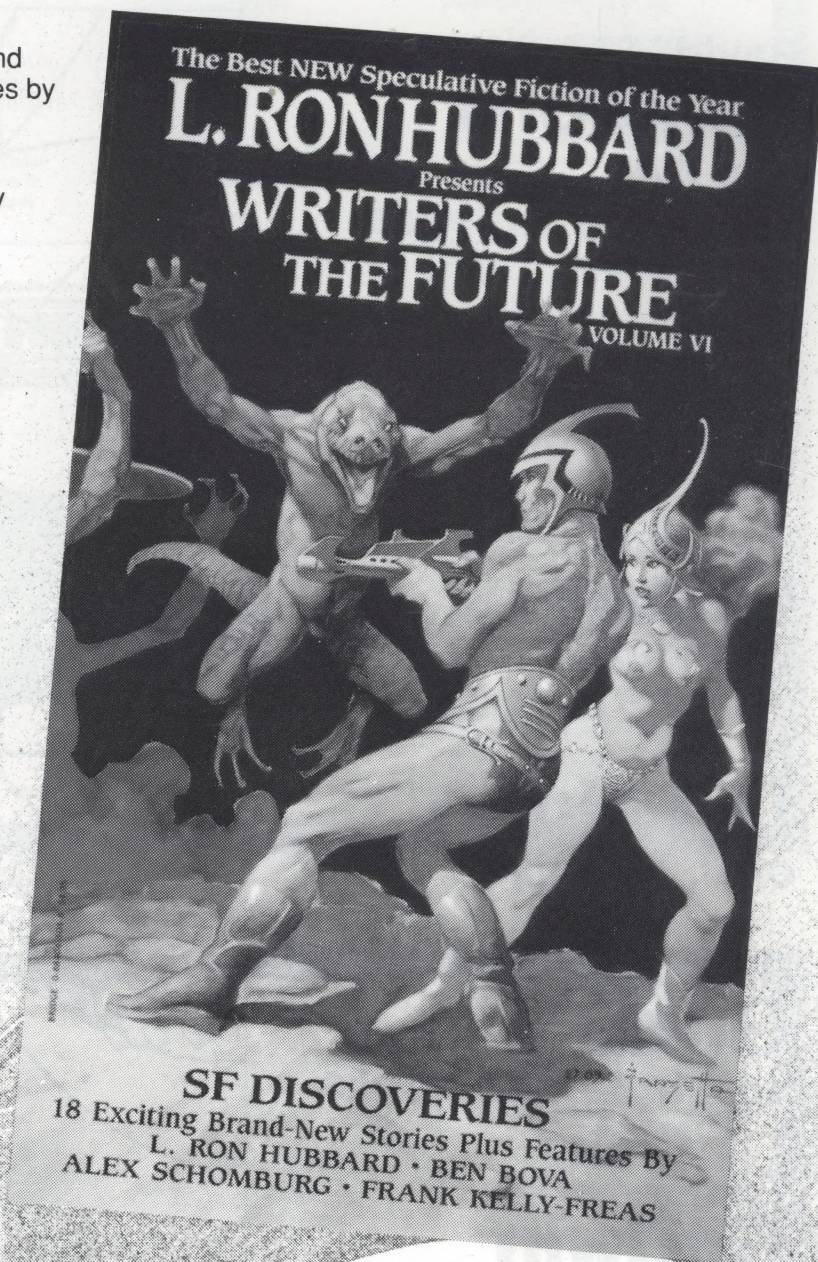
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QUANTUM

SCIENCE FICTION & FANTASY REVIEW

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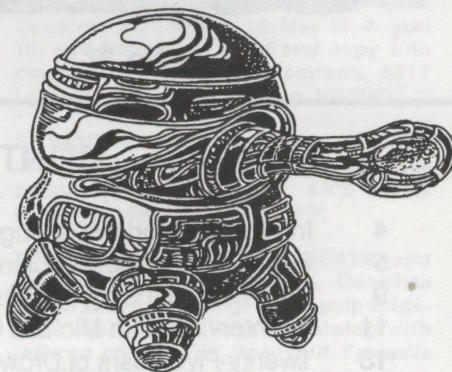
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IMPULSE



Doug Fratz

Our interview this issue is with Canadian science fiction and fantasy author Michael Greatrex Coney. He is best known for such books as *The Celestial Steam Locomotive*, *King of the Scepter'd Isle*, and *Fang, the Gnome*.

I was able to fit in more than feature articles than usual this issue, and am specially pleased to be able to start off the issue with another humorous article by the inimitable Dave Langford. Dave has the rare capability to not only read vast quantities of mediocre SF, but to actually *remember* it all!

At the other end of the seriousness spectrum is Paul Di Filippo's look at two remarkably similar novels written 25 years apart by J. G. Ballard, *The Drowned World* and *The Day of Creation*. I hope I can talk both Langford and Di Filippo into making frequent appearances in these pages.

Ardath Mayhar has already become a frequent contributor, and her article this issue continues on a theme that has emerged in several articles in recent issues of *QUANTUM*: fantasy versus science fiction. This appears to be an issue on which everyone has opinions worth listening to.

"Tom Godwin: A Personal Memory" is

one of those marvelous and unexpected articles that makes reading the *QUANTUM* slushpile worthwhile. It is written by Diane Sullivan Godwin, stepdaughter of the late Tom Godwin, a science fiction author best known for the classic short story, "The Cold Equations." I take special pride in being able to publish these kinds of personal accounts of what life was like for some of those who helped make the field what it is today.

Awards, Awards: Congratulations are due to Q staffers Poul Anderson, George Alec Effinger and Michael Bishop on their award nominations. I must profess some small degree of perplexity, however, at this year's awards nominations. In the novel category, I was glad to see Poul Anderson's expansively ambitious *The Boat of a Million Years* get both Hugo and Nebula nominations, but does anyone know why George Alec Effinger's different but equally impressive *A Fire in the Sun* was overlooked on the Nebula ballot? And what's the story on *Hyperion*, which also missed the Nebula ballot?

The Nebula nominations in general this year are perplexing. It may just be that the Nebula eligibility rules are so convoluted that I can't keep straight what is eligible. (Are the active SFWA members able to keep it straight?)

With the exception of Bishop's "The Ommatidium Miniatures," nominated for the Nebula but not the Hugo, I now find for the first time that I feel more affinity for the Hugo nominations than the Nebula nominations, instead of the other way around. Has a new trend begun in these awards? Have I changed tastes? Was this year just an aberration?

Coming Soon: A long feature review of the Panshins' analytical history of SF, *The World Beyond the Hill*; Stephen A. Kallis, Jr. on Doc Smith; interviews with Lisa Goldstein, Barbara Hambly, Michael P. Kube-McDowell, Janet Morris, Boris Valejo, Lawrence Watt-Evans, and Connie Willis; and undoubtedly much more, when I find time to open the mail....■

Welcome to *QUANTUM* 37. This issue is once again coming to you just over a month late—I may have to institutionalize this new schedule, since my best attempts to catch up have been unsuccessful.

I actually thought I had a shot of getting this out in early June, but mundane reality intruded, in terms of my primary career. Travel and other overtime have run rampant of late. Since my last editorial, for instance, I have had hectic two-to-six-day trips to Palm Beach (Florida), Sacramento, San Francisco, Chicago, Los Angeles, and undoubtedly some other cities that now slip my memory.

Final proofreading and layout for this magazine generally take me about 40 hours, if done within a ten-day period covering two consecutive weekends. In late April, I suddenly realized that I had no free weekends through mid-June. It's strange how a 40-hour job can take 80 hours if done one hour here and there....

The good news is that this issue, and future issues, will be at least four pages larger than issues in recent years. This increase can be made due to a change in printing method from sheet-fed (4-page interior signatures) to web (8-page interior signatures). Future issues will therefore be 36 total pages, unless enough advertising comes along to allow going to 44 pages.

The Issue At Hand: Our new, more flexible cover format allows for more flexibility in the number and size of features. I took advantage of that this issue to include a larger number of articles, columns and interviews. (In other issues, I may have half of the issue devoted to a single article, if a piece worthy of such attention comes along.)

Our columnists this issue are represented by Poul Anderson and Richard E. Geis. Poul writes this issue about some of the friends he's made in the field over the years. (Please feel free to write and let Poul know what topics you'd like to see him cover in future issues.) The fully-back-in-action Dick Geis looks at more recent SF this issue, as he splits his time between *QUANTUM*, the new *SFR* (which I haven't yet seen—it appears to have been launched with great stealth), and his own *The Geis Letter*.

Well, here it is: MONOCHROME, the Readercon Anthology. Featuring fiction and poetry by some of the guests of Readercon 3. It's got Thomas Disch, Esther Friesner, Ellen Kushner, James Morrow, Paul Park, Darrell Schweitzer, David Alexander Smith, Martha Soukup, and Gene Wolfe. Do you really need to know more? How about an introductory essay on reading by Samuel R. Delany? Sounds good, no? Available in two states: 150 copy limited hardcover edition, \$25.00; and, a trade paperback edition, \$9.95.

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FUN WITH SENSELESS VIOLENCE



Dave Langford

This is the first time ever that I've been invited to bore people rigid for a whole hour at a United States convention, and I'm filled up to here with a proud feeling of total terror. When I looked at the convention publicity flyers, I found myself billed as a British humorist, reviewer and fan writer—so it seemed as though the obvious thing to do would be to sit here, just like Harlan Ellison in a shop window, and fan-write some reviews full of British humour. The committee persuaded me otherwise by waving *very big sticks*, which inspired me to talk instead about senseless violence in science fiction.

To help you enrich your own lives with gratuitous science-fictional violence, I promise to give full instructions for building a lethal cold ray, to explain why all Isaac Asimov's robots are shamefully in violation of the First Law of Robotics, to reveal the logical power source behind the galaxy-busting artillery in your favourite space operas, and to mention L. Ron Hubbard.

Last year was a significant anniversary in my own career of senseless violence. It was just about 25 years before that I first strayed into a bookshop and was fascinated by the garish spaceships and death rays on the cover of Bertrand Russell's *History of Western Philosophy*. Fortunately I couldn't

afford this, and bought a lot of cheap remaindered science fiction instead. Although none of it was by Bob Shaw [another Picon guest], my fate was sealed.

The first really bad results of SF obsession showed up in 1979, when, urged on by megalomania, flattery and electric cattle prods, I lost my convention-speech virginity, by giving a talk with the tasteful title "Genocide for Fun and Profit".

This was based on the first book I'd written all by myself, *War in 2080*, full of futuristic military hardware and destined to make an enormous splash in the international remainder market. Although it was supposed to be non-fiction, the book took its inspiration from SF—which is the posh way of saying I ripped off hordes of ideas from my favourite literature. Especially the sort of trigger-happy stuff where every minor skirmish sounds like this extract from my own very early story "Sex Pirates of the Blood Asteroid":

*A nearby galaxy exploded.
And at that fateful signal, each of the arch-fiend Nivek's countless ships and planetary installations discharged the full, awesome power of its primary projectors, the blazing beams of destruction combining into a hellish flare of starkly incalculable incandescence against which no possible defense might prevail!*

Nivek snarled in rage. "Missed...."

You'll be glad to know that this villain is

duly brought to book and made to face charges of "multiple genocide, ordinary genocide, genocide with mitigating circumstances, accidental genocide, genocide in self-defense" and many more.

One can't help noticing that fashions in genocide have changed over the years. Most writers are now a little bit more cautious than my mentor Doc Smith, who with schoolboyish enthusiasm used to let his clean-cut heroes wipe out every single member of every unfriendly race, thus ensuring that they wouldn't be tempted to do it again. Whatever it was. Afterwards, the victors could pronounce a simple but touching epitaph, such as "QX! Hot jets and clear ether! In sync to the skillionth of a whillionth of a nanosecond!"

With his very late book *Subspace Encounter*, there were signs that Doc Smith was developing posthumous qualms about all this. One of his characters actually remembers what it said in the Boy Scout Handbook and blurts out, "Genocide is supposed to be reprehensible." Unfortunately, his next word is: "But...."

Of course Britain's very own Robert Lionel Fanthorpe left out the *But* in his novel (if that's the word I'm groping for) *Power Sphere*. The verb in this book's very last speech has clearly influenced the jargon of the Pentagon: "And that," said Salford, with grim irony, "is how Agent 1117 extincted a rather unpleasant race!"

L. Ron Hubbard in *Battlefield Earth* rather felt that before wiping out a planetful

This article was adapted from a guest of honour speech delivered at Orycon 11 in Portland, Oregon, in 1989.

of gooks and erasing their whole lousy biosphere, one should have some definite moral justification. He therefore made it clear that his fiendish "Psychlos" are aptly named, since they've allowed their brains to be adjusted by those hated cultists called psychiatrists—as opposed to the ideologically sound opposition, based in Los Angeles and East Grinstead.

The Orson Scott Card approach is substantially more humane. Here, after first slaughtering the tastefully named Buggers right down to the very last arthropod, his caring young hero consoles them by feeling, at great length, guilty about it. The resulting depth of emotion brought tears to my nostrils.

Both Joe Haldeman and James White, who are so notoriously nice guys, stop a long way short of this. Their favourite approach is to have it discovered—after only a fractional micro-genocide or so—that there has been a mistake. The original first contact message, saying something like "Greetings, Earthling scum! We come to annihilate you painfully and rape your planet," turns out to be a misprint. After shooting all their interpreters, both sides can live happily ever after.

Nobody could accuse Jack Chalker of being prejudiced—when he throws a genocide, *everyone's* invited. In the climactic *Well World* book, he shrewdly covers up his own spot of indiscriminate mass slaughter with a version of the traditional escape clause, "With one bound he was free!" Yes: having blasted the entire universe into a smoking heap of superstring fragments, he has it repaired again before anyone can notice. Well, replaced with a copy actually, but a really good one. Philosophers and TV scriptwriters love this kind of temporary total annihilation, since you can do it every week without spoiling series continuity.

Piers Anthony does something rather similar in *Being a Green Mother*, which admittedly is a fantasy but which deserves a mention here because of its contribution to the very scanty archives of Post-Genocide Dialogue. After the heroine has wiped all life from the Earth in a slightly overstated temper tantrum, we're faced with the burning question of what, precisely, should Mummy say to a daughter who's just obliterated the entire human race? The answer, from the Piers Anthony Book of Etiquette, is: "I think we should talk, dear."

For the sake of fairness I'd like to taunt more British authors, but unfortunately my compatriots rather tend to shirk the important issue of genocide, thanks to something which New York publishers call British gloom. Long before the cheerful interstellar slaughter can begin, your typical British future society has poetically gone down the tubes, owing to famine, plague, floods, trifids and reading too much J. G. Ballard.

I suppose the most worrying authors are those who, claiming to be inspired by the late great Robert Heinlein, explain that their alien heavies just have to be bombed into extinction because there is no choice—because they're the Universe's toughest, meanest, deadliest, most unrelenting critters, who in defense of their twisted, perverse views will fight on, tooth, nail and tentacle, asking no mercy and showing no quarter, so long as a single one survives.

This looks like quite a strong argument

until you notice that the same authors tend to praise Man (rarely, for some strange reason, Woman) as the Universe's toughest, meanest, deadliest, most unrelenting critter, who in defense of his noble, idealistic views will fight on, tooth, nail and nuclear handgun, asking no mercy and showing no quarter, so long as a single Jerry Pournelle survives.

One can't help thinking that should a lot of suspicious and technologically superior aliens get their ideas about us from this kind of deeply philosophical science fiction, it could cause some problems in interstellar diplomacy. The message would appear to be: "Hi there, alien weirdos! We're rough, tough, mean, deadly, xenophobic, and will listen to no argument short of racial extinction, ha ha!" This might not be the best way to persuade the Galactic Federation to overlook our terrible social lapse of being (ugh) carbon-based. But, as usual, I digress.

In my rather short career as a weapons physicist in the '70s, I got interested in how all the hardware of interstellar annihilation actually worked—not to mention its terrible side-effects. I have gathered statistical evidence that doomsday machinery capable of taking out more than three planets without reloading has an absolutely devastating and incurable effect on one's prose style.

Here for example is a modest little attack with energy beams, as described in one of the least brilliant SF novels ever published, *The Troglodytes* by "Nal Rafcam". These troglodytes, like the book's readers, are completely speechless; so we don't know the motive behind "their master plan to reduce the world to utter disaster", but this is how they begin:

The speechless ones moved into the camp. Their lethal machines were triggered and like a flash of lightning the whole camp was ablaze from the huts on the rim of the camp right through the camp. Everything was incinerated. Every living person was killed the moment the deadly emissions from the tribe's machinery pierced through the camp's superficial structure. So instantaneous and final were these lethal rays that the destructive act was over in but a few minutes.

Larry Niven has philosophized somewhere about how space drives can make ever such good weapons and vice-versa. This was actually anticipated by our troglodytes, whose spacecraft zooms through the atmosphere driven by two enormous lasers. One is at the back and heats up the air in order to drive the ship forward "much in the fashion of a jet". The other laser points forward and clears the atmosphere away from in front of the craft. To engage full reverse thrust, you need only leave one of these lasers full on while simultaneously not turning off the other.

For some reason this cunningly designed ship fails to work for more than a few pages; it then turns into a badly written fireball and takes all the flying troglodytes with it. As the author mournfully remarks, "No human could have endured the immense heat, let alone super-humans."

I will tactfully not mention the mighty battle lasers described in Fritz Leiber's otherwise jolly good book *The Wanderer*. In particular I am not going to mention the

way the beams are luridly visible in space, and even less am I going to mention how they continue to be visible, speeding away to infinity, for several seconds after the firing stops. This is obviously where George Lucas did his research.

About ten years before *The Wanderer*, Arthur C. Clarke's *Earthlight* had a battle on the Moon that featured a secret weapon, "a solid bar of light stabbing at the stars." Everyone boggles and goes on about how "no beam can be visible in a vacuum", but Clarke has a secret up his sleeve, consisting of electromagnets accelerating a jet of white-hot molten metal to squirt holes right through attacking spacecraft. Later, our Arthur became a bit quiet about this book, because—he said—he'd grown ashamed of writing the battle scene; but also just possibly because he'd remembered what happens to metals when they're heated past the Curie temperature. White-hot molten iron is so feebly magnetic that the vast accelerating coils you'd need would probably be powerful enough all by themselves to suck enemy planes out of the sky, and spacecraft out of orbit.

That reminds me that the Earth's own magnetic field is a big problem for particle beams, since it makes them bend in a rather limp and Freudian way. In the '70s some real-world weapons physicists hit on the idea of firing *uncharged* particles which wouldn't swerve in Earth's field. Since neutral particles are bloody hard to accelerate, the cunning plan was to use protons and hire someone to attach electrons to them as they left the accelerator's muzzle at close to the speed of light. The only other thing I remember about this wondrous scheme is its nickname, "Sipapu"—supposedly an old American Indian word meaning neutral hydrogen beam weapon.

I think the most *economical* particle gun of all time must be the one Charles Harness invented for his story "The New Reality". This gadget fires exactly one photon. A carefully angled prism then places this single photon in a dreadful quantum dilemma, where it has to make an awkward decision with no chance of hiding in the statistics.

According to the author, the poor thing's only choice is to vanish in a fit of embarrassment. Since this naturally wrecks the law of conservation of energy, the side-effect of Harness's single-shot photon gun is to destroy the universe. Luckily his hero falls through the hole into a nice new creation and can start saying the usual things like, "And I shall call you... Eve!"

As a change from all those coruscating beams of hot stuff, SF writers have always had a sneaking fondness for cold rays too. I never understood how these worked until I found the scientific explanation in a 1930 story by Bob Shaw's favourite author, Captain S.P. Meek. Since you can focus a beam of light or heat through a lens, the obvious trick is to put a big thick piece of cardboard in front of your heat source and let the lens focus the resulting *absence* of heat into a searing pinpoint of spine-chilling cold.

"Even at two miles," says the Captain's wicked scientist, "I could produce a local temperature of three hundred degrees below zero." (Fahrenheit. I hope.)

The marvelous thing about this cold projector is that, just as with John

W. Campbell's Hieronymous Machine, you can cut production costs by leaving out most of the parts—such as the heat source we started with. The pocket version is merely a powerful lens with insulation sprayed on one side. No batteries needed, and never again will you run out of ice at parties.

My own variant of this astounding piece of super-science involves a multi-kilowatt audio amplifier which takes its input from a very high quality earplug. (Two earplugs for the stereo version.) The hugely amplified lack of sound produces a deafening blare of silence which could really mess up enemy communications for miles around, and would enormously improve the Worldcon business meeting. Which reminds me that it was the famous 18th-century wit Sydney Smith who said, of Ian Watson, "He has occasional flashes of silence that make his conversation perfectly delightful."

Just because I'm a physics chauvinist, I shouldn't overlook exciting biological handguns like the Delling in *Whirlpool of Stars* by "Tully Zetford" (who we are not supposed to know is really Britain's very own Ken Bulmer). A Delling appears to be a precision-engineered water pistol filled with some horrid goo distilled from the remnants of convention room parties. In a half-hearted attempt at the Lionel Fanthorpe thesaurus record, Zetford tells us with subtle understatement what happens when this is fired at you.

Giffler melted.

His body deliquesced. It oozed. His head flowed and collapsed and sloughed. Still upright, he melted and shrank and collapsed, his body shimmered like a blood-drenched jelly. He shrank and oozed and formed a contracting pool of scum on the yard stones.

The man in black, Goton Telander, walked out of the Custom House door, He still held the Delling. With a finicky motion he flicked his fingers and the electronic and neural circuits whipped the gun back up his sleeve. It had all been so very slow and yet so very quick.

Giffler had been destroyed....

A robot vacuum cleaner and scrubber darted out on rubber wheels and began to suck and clean the spot where Giffler had died.

Good old hotel room service; they never give up.

The oldest form of biological warfare consists of poisoning wells, or forcing visitors to drink British hotel coffee. An exciting new slant on this technique comes from the fantasy novel I've already mentioned, by an author who had better remain nameless but lives in Florida. The book's very wonderful and enlightened heroine exerts her special powers and detects that there is indeed something objectively wrong with a village water supply. I quote: "Anyone who drank in it would be sickened, and clothes washed in it would remain unclean. The soul of the water reeked of its special pollution." In a powerful and moving feminist statement, we then learn why. The buried water-main had been walked over by—a woman. No comment. Absolutely no comment.

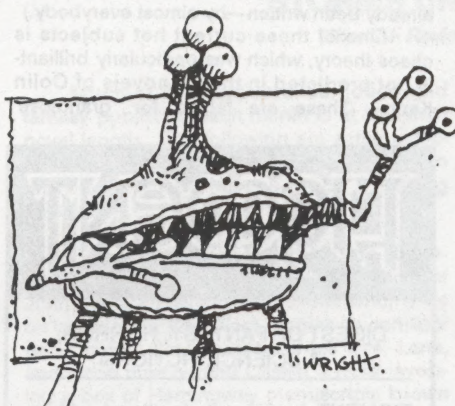
Appalling biological weaponry usually works a bit less quickly than that: you know,

the alien enemy infiltrates us and arranges over a long, long period to addict hordes of people to sinister pleasures which are so hard to give up that [cough] the addicts won't [cough cough] stop even when told it's [cough cough hack spit cough] killing them. Addictive pleasures like, for example, science fiction conventions.

The idea of slowly-acting weapons brings me at once to Isaac Asimov, who these days is unable to write a sentence like "He was instantaneously disintegrated in a puff of smoke" without expanding the action into several long chapters, full of explanatory dialogue, visits to the toilet, and new additions to the Laws of Robotics.

What Asimov has failed to reveal in all his books is that positronic robots themselves are a long-term weapon against humanity. His feeble excuses for the lack of robots by the time of the Foundation series merely show that he's part of the cover-up, and evidently in the pay of that malevolent alien consortium known to Earthlings as the editorial board of Doubleday. The truth is that robots were banned by the Galactic Empire because they were too dangerous.

Asimov gives the game away in his first few robot stories. The positronic robot brain operates, we are told, by the internal creation



and annihilation of—surprise!— positrons. When positron meets electron, the annihilation energy is in fact over a million electron volts, producing a burst of hard gamma radiation. Inside one of these positronic supercomputers, this must be happening billions and billions of times per second, with gammas and X-rays spraying out like nuclear halitosis. Obviously it's extremely hazardous to stand anywhere near a robot—especially when it's thinking.

This is confirmed by Asimov's own novels and their descriptions of his most robot-infested planet of all, a place called Solaria, where (a) there are hardly any flesh-and-blood people left, while (b) the few survivors eventually become genetically weird and grow funny lumps on their heads. It all hangs together, you see.

But, you are asking yourselves— those of you who aren't snoring or wondering who this Isaac Asimov is—but surely my analysis is totally demolished by the other well-known fact that hard radiation causes Asimovian robot brains to seize up so fast as to leave no time even for a traditional chorus of "Daisy, Daisy..."? If robots already spew out gamma rays, how can this be? I will tell you.

Control yourselves.

High-energy gammas from an external source will produce random electron-positron pairs as they pass through matter. These will appear in the robot mind as wrong and illogical thoughts from outside, such as an irrational desire to write a trilogy containing more than three volumes. Of course the robot itself can detect this malfunction and intelligently deduces the whole scenario I've just explained, intelligently realizes it's been leaking harmful rays in defiance of the First Law all its life, and as a result, intelligently suffers immediate brain death. Which, just like the best-seller lists, demonstrates again that intelligence *doesn't* have much survival value.

Now of course a *real* SF hero or heroine would never stoop to pointing gamma sources at defenseless robots. This is no way to deal with a villainous artificial intelligence which has just gone insane and announced, "Yes, *now* there is an L. Ron Hubbard!" Instead, traditionalists have a choice of three ecologically sound disposal methods which do not consume fossil fuels, or lead to hazardous waste. The only objection is that outside the glorious pages of science fiction, they may not always work.

Method one involves logical subtlety. The mighty-thewed, pin-headed SF hero cries, "Accept input: everything I say is false!" The world-dominating electronic brain can only reply *Fzzzt crackle crackle*, and seizes up with its display showing the final, defiant message, "Please contact your hardware dealer." Other good questions to blow the minds of computers are, "Why is a raven like a writing desk?", "What is the sound of one waldo clapping?" and "Do you realize I haven't backed up my data this week?"

Method two is not easy to distinguish from method one, and consists of the Very Dumb Question. Thus Patrick McGoochan in *The Prisoner* painfully typed in the word "Why?" and totally destroyed a hyperintelligent computer complex which might reasonably have come right back with "Why not?"

Method three is sensitive and emotional, with the heroine placing one defiant hand on her brass bra to declaim, "There are limits to your power, Machine! You cannot love... or weep." Whereupon the mad computer's only remaining option is to die of embarrassment.

Of course, in science fiction, these low-budget weapons consisting of pure information are also popular for use against people. I suspect that writers— pallid, flabby and inept creatures that they are— like them because they're easy to lift and require little skill to aim. The idea is that this deadly data, once it gets into your mind, will cause you to fall over twitching, bleeding from the eyeballs and frothing at every orifice, like a very young fan who's just read his first William Gibson story.

These infant fans all seem to think that the notion of brain-bursting information—"concepts that the mind cannot stomach"—was invented by Gibson in the 1980s. Just to show off my superior erudition, I can't resist pointing out the weird coincidence that it cropped up twice in October 1969, with the appearance of two similar works, Piers Anthony's *Macroscopic* and the first episode of *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. Remember the sketch about the funniest

joke in the world, which no one can hear and live? The German version goes: *Wenn is das Nunstck git und Slotermeyer? Jal ...Beiherhund das Oder die Flipperwalt gersput*. Not many people know this is a quotation from Wittgenstein and translates as, "Whereof we cannot speak, thereon we must remain aaaaaaaargh."

Anyway, British SF pundits go on about how Fred Hoyle used the idea of unthinkable information years before, in *The Black Cloud*, 1957, and really offensive nitpickers like myself remind them that the world's funniest and deadliest joke features in a poem by that famous American, Oliver Wendell Holmes, who in 1894 died laughing.

Which is what I nearly did when I read about the methods of the arch-villain in Charles Sheffield's recent "hard science fiction" novel *Proteus Unbound*. This fiend has the unsocial habit of driving his potential enemies insane, by mercilessly beaming them animated pictures of himself dancing backwards in red tights.

These non-macho software weapons sound too much like magic spells to the true fan of hard science fiction, who insists that stories be based on rigorous extrapolation from known scientific facts about antigravity, faster-than-light craft, instantaneous communication, infinity generators and time travel....

For example, people were quite cruel to Bob Shaw for his astrophysical cover-up in *The Ragged Astronauts*. Just as you're fretting that the twin planets sharing a common atmosphere can't possibly work, Bob cunningly inserts a mention that this is, er, another universe, where *pi* happens to be exactly three. In other words, anyone wanting to prove the set-up is impossible must first ask Bob for the value of the gravitational constant in these foreign parts. The reply is always: "It's defined as whatever makes my solar system work."

I pointed out if you decide like this to make your own rules, it seems entirely reasonable that this different universe will also have its own special grammar, syntax and spelling, so that the publishers could save a fortune in proofreading. Mr. Shaw's reply was not printable, but by the end of the third book (*The Fugitive Worlds*) the use of an intergalactic mega-weapon has changed the value of *pi* to... about three and one-seventh. You can imagine people stalking around scratching their heads and muttering, "That circle looks a different shape somehow."

Funnily enough, no one seems to protest half as much when writers dream up space drives that change another important constant by furtively pushing our universe's maximum speed limit up towards infinity. And not many authors have picked up on the very useful implication that if *c* approaches infinity and Einstein's dear old $E=mc^2$ still works, you get an awful lot more output from a nuclear reaction. I mean, the fusion of one hydrogen atom could provide all the energy you need to zoom right round the universe detonating suns and wrecking galaxies, and there'd still be an infinite surplus which would have to be either stored in infinitely many batteries or converted back to a single subatomic particle.

I assume that this kind of rigidly scientific power source is what makes AKKA work. AKKA, you might possibly remember, is the plot-saving gadget from Jack Williamson's

The Legion of Space, which when all else fails can be hauled out of your sleeve to destroy entire invading spacefleets, plus any odd moons and planets that stray into the line of fire. It's conveniently portable, it needs no batteries, all the parts can be bought from Radio Shack except for the bits of wood, and I've always been impressed by the luck of the inventor who first stumbled on this world-wrecking principle and just happened not to be pointing it at anyone, or at the Earth, or the Moon, or the stars....

This is all because of topology, which was just making its first shy appearance as an explanation for everything in SF. Previous explanations for everything included atoms, rays, radium, magnetism, mesmerism, and General Semantics: invoking one of these magic names automatically meant that you didn't have to explain any more. Of course new catch-phrases still arrive every year or so. 1950s futures were full of people taking cooling drinks of heavy water. Later on they did their hair in gravity waves, and today's SF characters can't so much as tie up a parcel without resorting to superstrings. Not to mention burying their dead in a super-symmetry.

(I once planned a trend-setting story to be called "Cyberfractal Wetware meets Godel's Infinite Black Hole Designer Psychosis in the Quantum Gutter"; but I found it had already been written—by almost everybody.)

One of these current hot subjects is chaos theory, which was particularly brilliantly not predicted in the SF novels of Colin Kapp. These are fabled for grandiose

weaponry and conspicuous consumption. *The Patterns of Chaos*, for example, has a plot device which will make your forebrain bulge with galactic concepts until the sense of wonder comes spurring from your ears. See, there are all these planet-wrecking hellburner bombs which have been traveling between galaxies for an awesome seven hundred million years, and they're aimed at the hero. In a subtle refinement of suspense which would have brought tears to the eyes of Henry James, they keep just missing—but going off closer and closer. One of them in fact misses the hero by less than one metre. Well, as the author reluctantly explains, one metre and 16.1 hours.

All this is as nothing to the super-artillery of Kapp's follow-up *The Chaos Weapon*. This massive device projects devastating bolts of pure entropy, so vicious and irresistible that they could—they could turn Hal Clement and Arthur C. Clarke into 1960s New Wave writers, or even cyberpunks. With power like that, it will come as no surprise that the Chaos Weapon has to be fed with an ammunition belt of suns, while its hellish beam is focused by a ring of ten black holes. Things certainly look bad for the hero when he gets hit by its full output.

Fortunately it's only a glancing blow—which merely bounces his spaceship (I quote) "against the elastic walls of the continuum itself". I love this traditional SF picture of the fabric of space as a kind of rubberized canvas which an enterprising art thief could cut right out of its metrical frame.

Bouncing off it does lead to some sticky problems: to quote Kapp again, "the ship was not circumventing the light barrier but had become enmeshed in it". But our hero soon makes a comeback and proves the worth of the indomitable human spirit by diving out of the airlock with another planet-wrecking hellburner bomb "clasped under one arm"—and the Chaos Weapon is put out of commission faster than you could say "contracted wordlength".

It was that book that made me realize again why it can be almost soothing to read violent space operas full of megaweaponry and exploding planets. In more than 92% of cases, by careful use of outrageously lousy physics and a level of literary craftsmanship which makes the physics look quite good, the authors manage to convince us that these universe-busting arsenals could never conceivably work.

That thought comforted me in my years of working for the British Ministry of Defense under the terrible shadow of fear that nuclear weapons would be dropped. Our lab technicians were so clumsy that the most likely place for one to be dropped was on my foot.

I think that's about enough senseless violence for one program item, but I'd like to leave you with a cheering thought about science fiction and its uplifting moral effects. Although pundits keep claiming that porno potboilers and splatter movies excite their fans into real-life acts of imitation, I'm glad to report that despite a lifetime of violent SF I have never once disintegrated a hostile galaxy, or used a huge gamma laser to blow up the sun, or even wiped out a single measly planet in a multi-gigaton antimatter blast. And I hope that everyone in today's SF community, with the possible exception of Greg Bear, can say the same.

Thank you. ■

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Digest of Fantasy, Horror,
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The former policy of this column was that it had no policy. Now editor Fratz asks that it always have something to do, however tenuously, with science fiction or fantasy. Obliging him is easy enough. One way or another, those touch on practically anything you care to name. The people involved, whether as professionals, fans, or readers, have work and outside interests often reaching into every corner of life around the globe. Far from being isolated in a little village of neurotic escapists, through SF I have made an extraordinary variety of friends. I'm sure the same is true of many of you who read this. Let me share a few recollections.

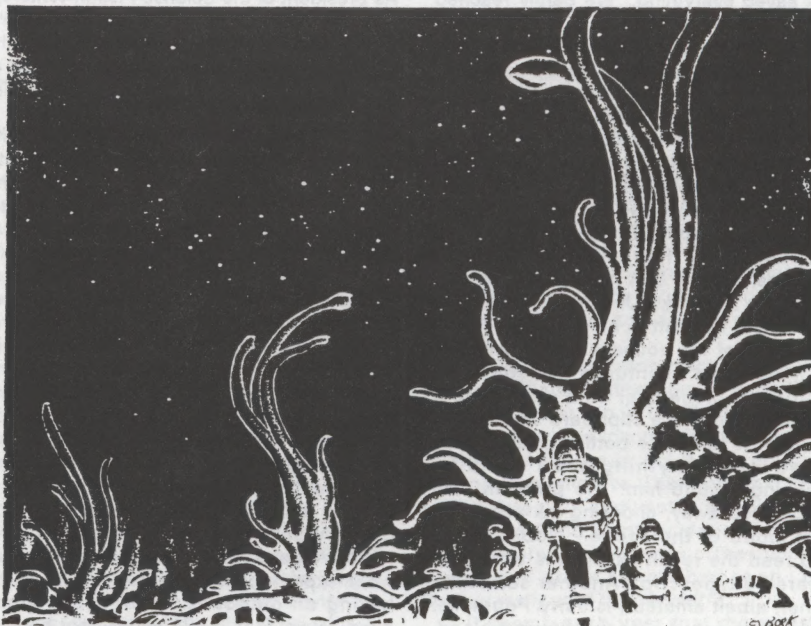
Karen and I met at a convention. We've been together a while. It's customary to celebrate one's silver wedding anniversary with a big party, but we happened to be in Egypt then, so come 1987 we threw a third-of-a-century bash, 33 years and four months.

Our activities have reached well beyond SF. For instance, there's Sherlock Holmes fandom, known to itself as Irregularity. While a high school girl in the Washington, D.C. area, Karen with a friend started the society that still flourishes under the name she gave it in that McCarthy era, The Red Circle; and she is still listed as its president. When we moved out to where we are now, we worked together to revive the San Francisco group which Anthony Boucher had helped found but which had not met for a long time. It's grown into one of the largest and most productive anywhere. Like others, it derives its name from a story. In this case it's the Scowlers, a terrorist organization in *The Valley of Fear* modeled on the actual Molly Maguires. Until recently, all Baker Street Irregulars were men, a precedent that scion societies were expected to follow. Since quite a few women hereabouts were interested and had much to contribute, an outfit was created for them, which just happens to have the same officers and meet at the same times and places. It is, obviously, the Molly Maguires.

Karen has published fiction and poetry of her own, but mainly she's come up with ideas for me or helped me lick mine into shape. Sometimes this collaboration has been so close that a shared byline is only proper. Always she rides herd, tracking down facts, pointing out errors and illogicalities, in general acting as the world's premier nitpicker (who would never allow me to mix metaphors like this in pay copy). After our daughter Astrid married our colleague Greg Bear, he was sufficiently impressed that he asked her to do likewise for him, which she's happy to do. Greg may be the only man alive who purposely invites his mother-in-law's criticism.

Tony Boucher, whom I mentioned above, co-founder and long-time editor of *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, became a dear friend; two decades after his death, we still often find ourselves missing him. Among other things, he was a writer and reviewer in the mystery field, an opera buff with a vast collection of rare recordings that he played on his own radio program, a gourmet cook, a demon poker player, and active in his church and political party. He, a left liberal Democrat and devout Roman Catholic, and I, a libertarian conservative (or conservative libertarian, depending on the

Beer-Mutterings



Poul Anderson

phase of the moon and the look of the weather) and devout scientist, had some grand arguments, the kind that go on until sunrise. I remember us once agreeing that a very attractive feature of the Mormon faith is its doctrine that the Constitution of the United States was divinely inspired.

Tony, *F&SF* co-founder J. Francis (Mick) McComas, Reginald Bretnor, Rog Phillips, Rog's wife Honey, Karen, and I took to holding a monthly poker game. Since several among us had chronic medical problems, the group dubbed itself the Outpatients' Poker Clinic. Members took turns hosting it, and the rivalry that developed as to who could set forth the best dinner proved, once again, Adam Smith's thesis that competition benefits everybody. We weren't serious, the stakes being small and wild card games acceptable, dealer's choice. A lot of banter went on. In fact, we negated Tony's dictum that there is no such thing as a friendly poker game. Still, we played tough. Early on, I was routinely plucked clean; such perversions as "Baseball," "Number One," or "Low Hole Wild" (which we called "Love a Duck") were too much for me. Gradually I developed some skill. As a result, once when I happened to be staying overnight at a resort with a group of businessmen and a game of ordinary stud got started, I went through them like a devouring flame.

Mick suffered a disabling stroke and later died. Rog died. Reg Bretnor brought in a recruit who became a mainstay, and the Outpatients played on until Tony's death. That was more than they could bear. I

haven't tossed a chip into a pot since then.

Of that other great editor, John Campbell, I have written at length elsewhere; also of my old friend and quondam collaborator Gordon Dickson. Let me know if you'd like me to do it again in these pages.

Frank Herbert didn't seem related to the author of such grim, complex works as *Dune* and *The Dragon in the Sea*. He was stocky, jolly, forever bubbling over with enthusiasm, and another gourmet cook. Likewise, you wouldn't take Jack Vance for the inventive fabulist and peerless stylist that he is. He's been a sailor, a master carpenter, an amateur jazz musician (Dixieland), a world traveler; and he can cook up a mean meal himself, though in that department his wife is more gifted yet. The three of us decided to build a houseboat—Jack sketched the plans on the back of an envelope—which we'd take from San Francisco Bay to the Sacramento-San Joaquin delta to be a floating summer cottage for our families. The project came to occupy years of Sundays, but those were among the happiest of my life.

One factor that slowed us down was cost. We were none of us rich at that time. Frank suggested a three-way collaboration on a story, the proceeds to be earmarked for the project. "And our pseudonym," he exclaimed, "—Noah Arkwright!" It didn't work out, but years later I slipped Noah Arkwright into a book.

When she was about three-fourths finished, a storm sank the boat at her dock. Nothing but a single disconsolate corner of the house showed above high water. Frank still had honest employment then, as a

newsman, so the task of raising her fell to Jack and me. Our efforts, trying first this and then that, became an epic of men against the sea that would have been worthy of the pen of Joseph Conrad, if Joseph Conrad had written slapstick. After a month we succeeded, beached her, and made repairs. Here Frank saved everything. We barely reached the nearest shore, which was on refinery property, and the security guards descended on us full of dire threats. Never before or since have I heard such fast, glib, subtly intimidating talk as Frank's when he dissuaded them. We did complete the boat, take her to her destination, and enjoy wonderful lazy weekends.

Jack began writing while a merchant seaman during World War II, in which he was torpedoed twice. Privacy doesn't exist in forecastles, so lack of it never bothered him afterward in his work. Until he computerized a while ago, he'd sit in an armchair in the living room of his house—which, with his own hands and eventually his son's, he transformed piecemeal from a shack to a mansion—holding a clipboard and a steel pen. Beside him were bottles of differently colored inks. Anything at all could be happening around him. No problem. He just scribbled away, choosing ink according to the mood of the scene. Nobody else could read the result except his wife, who prepared a typescript. Another sometime mariner, albeit amateur, is Jerry Pournelle. I've seen him called everything from a blood-thirsty fascist to a drunken bully, and I resent it. He does come on pretty strong, but his intolerance is only for fools and foolishness. (Lord knows, though, we're afflicted with a

lot of those.) His many acts of kindness go unremarked because he doesn't make a show of them. A volunteer, he put his life on the line and brought home wounds from Mr. Truman's war in Korea that caused him to walk with a cane for years. Happily, he worked his way back to entire soundness. As president of the Science Fiction Writers of America, which has got to be the most thankless job in the world, he applied executive skills to its restructuring and thus saved an organization that was at the point of falling apart.

Granted, his is a forceful personality. When he needed that cane, he made it a sword cane. Then an engineer, one time he'd been at a conference in New York out of which developed a poker game. Walking back to his hotel from that in the small hours, through deserted streets, he passed an alley. A socially deprived person glided out, switchblade sticking free. Jerry looked at him, said genially, "I'll see your six and raise you sixteen," and drew the blade. "Oh, no, man, oh, no, man," murmured the socially deprived person, fading back into the masonry. That was very bad of Jerry, wasn't it? The city authorities would have preferred he get robbed or killed.

He and I took a twenty-foot sloop from Seattle with the intention of sailing her down to Los Angeles. The attempt failed because we, inexperienced, made the mistake of not having an outboard motor. Foul winds, dead calms, fogs, and riptides kept hanging us up in the Strait of Juan de Fuca. We made an unprintable song about old Juan, pronouncing his surname as you might expect. Finally we put out to sea. South of

Cape Flattery we were hit by a full gale and spent the night clawing off the land. In Jerry's words, "I love my country, but not when she's a lee shore." We survived, made harbor, and spent the next three days weatherbound. It wasn't just us being timid; the whole fishing fleet was in. The place was Neah Bay, where the water is undrinkably nasty and an ordinance forbids even beer to be sold. When the storm cleared, Jerry had run out of time; in those days he had an employer. We returned to Seattle and arranged to truck the boat down.

An experience like that gives you the measure of a man. It is worth noting that, on the whole, this one provided me with some of my favorite memories.

More friendships come crowding to mind. Robert Heinlein. Ted Cogswell, of PITFCS fame. François Bordes, whose work rewrote prehistory. Ivan Efremov in Moscow, who never put the same stamp twice on his letters after he learned that our daughter collected. An engineer, championship athlete, and damn good writer in Norway. A Pole who conducted us around his country. The Peruvian ambassador to Jamaica and the Bahamas. A Skylab astronaut and Shuttle development director who said on meeting me, "Call me Joe." Several astronomers. Three ethical lawyers. A an operatic diva. Some generals and admirals. G. C. Edmondson's mad friend, and, for that matter, G. C. himself and his lovely wife. And a lot of people whose names you wouldn't recognize but who are every bit as interesting, sometimes wildly colorful.

If you like, I'll reminisce further sometime. Meanwhile, who says SF is narrow?■

"THE HOUR OF BLUE IS AWARD-WINNING MATERIAL..." ANALOG

The HOUR of BLUE

Robert Froese

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**ANALOG ALSO SAYS: "...A WOWSER."
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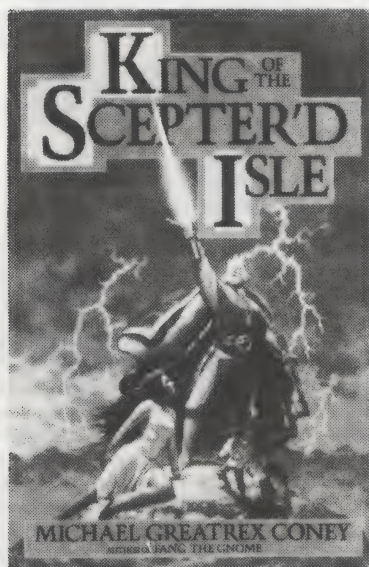
Michael Coney is described in *Twentieth Century Science Fiction Writers* as a science fiction writer with a taste for fantasy, who is equally at ease with horror, romance and humour. *Analog* has said of his work, "It has the clarity of speech, the imagery of classic SF; and the glory that was Faery". He is without question one of the most capable, prolific and diversely-talented writers on the current SF scene.

Since his first short story appeared in 1969, Coney has published eighteen novels, as well as a non-fiction book on forest rangers, and forty short stories. *Brontomek!* (1976) won the British Science Fiction Award for the best SF novel of the year. In his most recent work, Coney has moved from straight science fiction into Arthurian science-fantasy. *Fang, the Gnome* was released by NAL in February, 1988, followed by a sequel, *King of the Scepter'd Isle*, in the late 1989. Until his retirement last year, Coney also held down a full-time job with the British Columbia Forest Service, as well as running his own regional publishing company, Porthole Press.

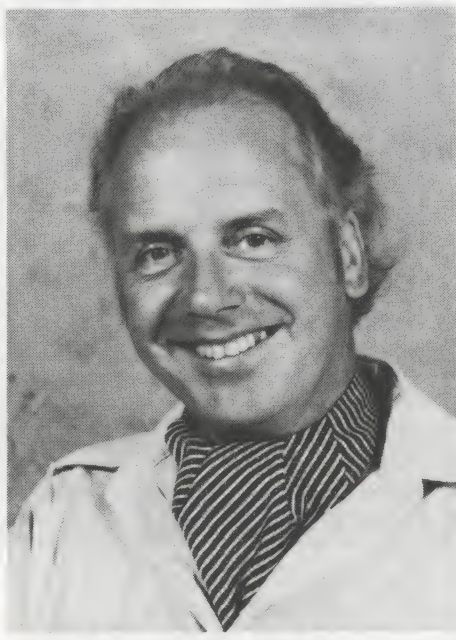
I spoke to him in the living-room of his Vancouver Island home. Looking out over the ocean from a park-like wooded area of Sidney, B.C., it's the kind of island hideaway most writers dream about. The Coneys designed the house themselves. From the large front windows you can watch the ferries from the mainland gliding into Schwartz Bay; the back of the house is sheltered by rocky slopes inhabited by a family of pet rabbits—and, quite conceivably, by some of Fang the Gnome's west coast relatives.

QUANTUM: As a writer who takes two years to complete a book, I'm awed by your productivity. What's your secret? Stern self-discipline? Ability to go without sleep?

Coney: I don't write fast, and self-discipline has never been my strong suit. I do plan fast, however, and I do very little research before or during writing (except for the Arthurian stuff in *Fang*). So usually I'm ready to start writing Chapter One a day or two after deciding another novel is due. I proceed with a knowledge of how the book will end, and a one or two page outline of how to get there.



AN INTERVIEW WITH MICHAEL G. CONEY



by Eileen Kernaghan

Sometimes I've completed the whole process in three weeks (*The Hero of Downways* and *Rax*), but usually a novel takes a couple of months of spare time.

QUANTUM: Tell me a bit about your background—birthplace, early education, career.

Coney: Born in Birmingham, England; father, a dentist, mother a librarian. Educated at a typical English boy's school where they hire intimidating teachers to cram you with every kind of useless knowledge so you don't have time to think about breasts. It's only in recent years, when writing, that I've found this education useful. It never had any relevance to my working life as a Chartered Accountant, pub manager, hotel manager, management consultant and so on. My life in that mundane world has been characterized by a compulsion not to succeed, because people who succeed are people who live their work and take briefcases of it home at night. And if you do that, you don't have time for writing. So I became expert in working well enough not to get fired, but not so well that I got promoted.

QUANTUM: What prompted you to begin writing science fiction?

Coney: A questionnaire in the British maga-

zine *New Worlds* in the mid-Sixties. This was at the height of the New Wave, a movement I found incomprehensible. I said so in my reply to the questionnaire, and I also said I could write better SF myself. So I tried. It took two years of writing pure old-fashioned junk before I sold my first story.

QUANTUM: Do you feel there are elements in your work which identify it as "British" (or "Canadian") SF as distinct from American?

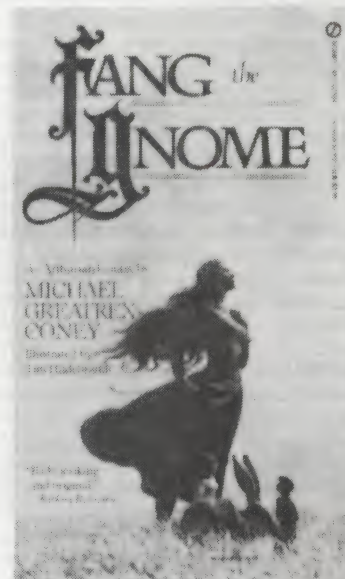
Coney: Yes, there do seem to be those elements. I am consciously trying to eradicate them, because I don't think national identity has any place in science fiction. There's nothing wrong with an author having a distinctive style, but it should be his or her own style, not one that every author born in England has.

QUANTUM: What writers have had an influence on your work? And which writers do you most admire? (Also, which writers do you read purely for pleasure?)

Coney: Almost every writer I've ever read has had some influence on my work. When I read something good, I find myself analyzing why it works, and I'm sure the result of that analysis will find its way into something I write, sooner or later. As for writers I admire... Dick Francis, John D. MacDonald, P.D. James, Keith Roberts, Jonathan Gash, Cordwainer Smith, Herman Wouk, Dorothy Sayers, Ken Follet and so on. There are too many to list, but they are mostly mystery/crime writers. That's what I read for pleasure.

QUANTUM: Critics have observed that your work is hard to classify, because you write in a variety of styles and are continually experimenting with new themes. How would you categorize the kind of science fiction you write? Are you conscious of writing for any particular audience?

Coney: Once I've explored something: style, a theme, or whatever, I like to move on. Writing for me is an adventure: I never know what's going to happen on the next page and I like it that way, which is why I don't



plan my novels in detail. If I don't have continuing change I get bored very quickly. The kind of SF I write is the kind I like: I can't think of any other way to categorize it. It always has a mystery element and the problems are always solved in the last chapters. It's a kind of mystery-story science fiction. I don't know who I write it for, apart from myself.

QUANTUM: Fang, the Gnome takes you in another new direction. Did you run into any special problems, making the switch from science fiction to fantasy?

Coney: Although we called Fang fantasy, the truth is it's really SF. Everything, including Excalibur, the gnomes, the dragon, the unicorn and so on, is explained in SF terms.

QUANTUM: Why did you decide to write an Arthurian fantasy? Was it an interest in Arthurian legend? The opportunity to do research, or to use a British setting?

Coney: I was interested by the problems inherent in writing Arthurian science fiction: real fantasy would have been too easy. I enjoyed the chance to use a setting with which I am familiar, but the research was a pain in the butt.

QUANTUM: You've mentioned that your publisher had some initial objection to the title Fang, the Gnome. Care to elaborate?

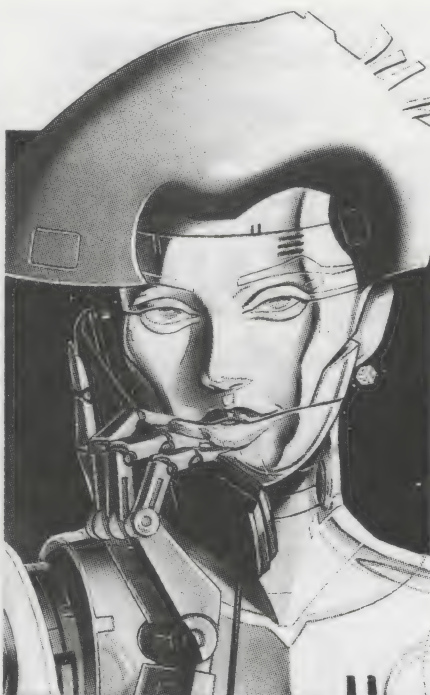
Coney: Originally NAL thought Fang, the Gnome was too threatening a title. So I tried them with Sir Gnome A Gnome in Arthur's Garden, Avalona, and a page of others. They rejected them all in turn, and in the end we were back with the original title.

QUANTUM: I recall your explaining at an SF convention the source of the name "The Miggot of One". I had the feeling that some of your other names (e.g. The Sharan and the Gooligog) have referents in the real world.

Coney: Yes, the Miggot of One was my granddaughter's mispronunciation of The Secret of NIMH, and it was too good not to use. It was fun inventing a rationale for it, too. The Sharan was named after Sharan Newman, who helped me with the Arthurian stuff. Fang was so called because it was a totally inappropriate name for a gnome, King Bison for the same reason. The Gooligog was a family monster I used to scare my kids with, sort of a bogey-man. The whole theme of my book was the utter incompetence of all characters except possibly Nyneve and Avalona, and they way they managed to fulfill various legends in spite of this. So the names were chosen to underline their ineffectualness.

QUANTUM: I noticed Fang had links with your Song of Earth novels. How did the whole group of stories come about?

Coney: Quite by accident. I wrote The Celestial Steam Locomotive as my tribute to Cordwainer Smith, using aspects of his style and his animal-people. My genetic engineer, Mordecai N. Whirst, is of course an



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anagram. When I'd finished I thought the novel was too long to sell, so I used the background for Cat Karina—one of my personal favorites. Surprisingly, Houghton Mifflin bought CSL, and asked me to make two books out of it, each of 120,000 words. There are few things worse than having to bisect a book; it means writing a completely new ending for Book I and a new beginning for Book II. So Gods of the Greataway came about. And when I submitted the original manuscript of Fang, the publishers asked me to do the same thing again! Hence King of the Scepter'd Isle.

QUANTUM: The Song of Earth represented quite a departure from your more earth-bound novels of the past.

Coney: With good reason. I was beginning to feel trapped by my own style, and I'd written a couple of books I didn't like much, so I wanted to do something completely different. A story where anything could happen, and still be justified in SF terms. The only proviso was: there had to be a steam locomotive flying through Space somewhere in there.

QUANTUM: Have we seen the last of the series now?

Coney: I thought we had, until I was rooting through some old manuscripts the other day. I found another Song of Earth novel written at the same time as Cat Karina that I'd totally forgotten. It's still in draft; the working title is The Tigress and the Mole. I guess I must have laid it aside when I got the request to bisect CSL, and never got back to it. Maybe I'll dust it off and bring it up to date; perhaps put some gnomes in. The trouble is, I don't have it on disk.

QUANTUM: You've used a Cornish fishing village as the setting for Fang, and many other stories. Does Cornwall have special associations for you?

Coney: My people came from Cornwall and I've spent many years in the southwest of England; it's my favorite part of the country. It's a suitable location for another reason; I detest dense populations and big cities and never write about them, and Devon and Cornwall are mostly rural.

QUANTUM: Can you tell us anything about your latest project?

Coney: I've recently finished two novels that take a different direction (again) and the best way I can describe them is to say they're comic fantasies and they're not talking animal books as we understand that sub-genre. They're an attempt to appeal to a wider audience, maybe even mainstream, and they grew out of the fun I had with the gnomes in Fang and King. No Place for a Sealion fulfills an ambition of mine: it's the first novel I've written in which nobody dies. I finished A Tomcat Called Sabrina this week. An independent comment on the draft was: "As a rule I don't like fascist beaver stories, but I liked this one." So now I'm rewriting a failed Harlequin, retitled Antiguan Sunrise, and when that's finished I want to try a mystery. ■

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF DROWNING:

Mapping J. G. Ballard's *The Drowned World* onto *The Day of Creation*



Paul Di Filippo

You are alone in a picture gallery. It's rather narrow and claustrophobic, but at the same time somehow exhilarating, womb-like, uterine. The walls are hung with paintings done all by the same artist, in a style so realistic that it subverts itself, becoming sheer fantasy. The concealed lighting washes the gilt-framed works in a kind of aquatic illumination, leaving you, the viewer, in shadow. The subjects—the subjects of the paintings are allegorical, iconic, representative of some foreign symbolism unknown to you (or at least to your conscious mind). You stand transfixed before each painting, letting the images soak into your limbic regions, the reptilian portions of your brain. Moving slowly from frame to frame, you find certain relationships beginning to make themselves evident among the works. A figure seen earlier reappears; a landscape, previously populated, now stands empty, save for an indistinct apparition silhouetted against the horizon....

At last you reach the end of the gallery. The exit sign beckons. You stumble out into the daylight, dizzy and confused with all you have seen.

Twenty-five years pass. You are living in a different city, wearing different clothes, a

different person. You have never forgotten that singular exhibit. One day you pass the door of another gallery. Something makes you halt. You return and enter.

It is the same artist. In fact, it appears to be the same paintings. An exhibit that remains static for a quarter of a century? On closer examination, you begin to change your mind. Are these really the same paintings? True, there are similarities. This filthy, ascetic figure, surely he is as you remember him.... But why is the exhibit having such a different effect on you? Has the order of the paintings been changed, the frames, the lighting? Are these really subtly warped recreations of the original works, infinitesimally altered by the sly artist? Is it the fact that you are now living in another era with its own distinct Zeitgeist, a metamorphosed sociocultural matrix surrounding the paintings? Is it that you alone have changed? Or, finally, perhaps some combination of all these factors?

Chances are you'll never know.

The fiction of J. G. Ballard has always seemed such an exhibit. The actors who form his stock company of psychological types, and their affectless relationships; his

"neuronic landscapes," the famous "inner space"; his obsessive, recurrent tropes; the assemblage of late-twentieth-century off-kilter inanimate objects, such as drained swimming pools.... These are the icons arrayed again and again before us, in varying configurations, with varying effects.

Nowhere, I believe, is the nature of Ballard's art more evident than in the simultaneous junction and disjunction between one of his oldest works, *The Drowned World*, and one of his latest, *The Day of Creation*.

What I would like to do here is, first, set forth the similarities—ranked roughly in importance from most significant to least—in a kind of catalog for our hypothetical exhibition, and then deal with the differences between the two works—which, in the end, are almost more important than the recurrent themes and patterns.

In no way do I mean to suggest that the latter work is some rip-off or mere re-write of the earlier piece, anymore than one Dali canvas is a rehash of another simply because both contain soft clocks. In fact, *The Day of Creation* strikes me as the more mature and esthetically satisfying of the two, although lacking *The Drowned World's*

obsessive, world-shattering dementia.

The Impotent Doctor, and His Wounds

The protagonist of TDOC is Dr. Mallory, an M.D. on assignment with the World Health Organization (the organization's acronym referring, no doubt, to his own uncertainty about his identity and role). The protagonist of TDW is Robert Kerans. While nominally a biologist instead of an M.D., Kerans is specifically called "Doctor," (p. 47) and in fact ministers to the wounded and sick among the military expedition occupying underwater London (p. 62).*

The role of healer is one that sits uneasily on both men. Their efforts are usually futile, and they frequently bring death instead. Mallory is indirectly responsible for the deaths of Miss Matsuoka, Mister Pal and all those soldiers and citizens assembled beneath the exploding dam, and directly for that of Captain Kagwa. Kerans bears less complicity in the fate of Bodkin, his co-worker, but more in the death of Strangman and his crew, and the soldier Macready (see section on "The Dam").

Both men have their symbolic successes, however. Mallory is given credit for treating the foot-wound of Noon, the native girl, and Kerans reinvigorates the wasted pilgrim Hardman with penicillin spray and fruit (p. 156), enough so that the man can continue his mad journey south.

In the course of their narratives, the two doctors both suffer grave wounds, along with a branding by the elements. Of the two, Kerans remains relatively untouched for longer. True, from the outset he is burnt black by the expanded sun, "virtually indistinguishable from...the negro crew" (p. 84), as is Mallory by his time upon the river. But Kerans remains basically unwounded, until his ceremonial debasement by Strangman quite late in the narrative, when he suffers lacerations and bruises (p. 129). This is followed by a gunshot wound from one of Colonel Riggs' soldiers. To the contrary, Mallory, beginning early on, in Chapter 2, suffers a continual assault: brutalization with rifle butts, near drowning, concussions, grazing by a rifle bullet, fever....

The net effect of all this weathering and wounding is to create a kind of suffering savior, a stymied healer whose obscure Stations of the Cross mark out some kind of transfigurative, possibly redemptive journey. It is around this essential, common pivot that both books will revolve.

There Is Water Underground

The overpowering motif linking the two novels—the similarity which initially caused me to want to compare the two books—is obviously the primacy of water, the symbolism of sea and shore, silt and estuary. The aquatic environment pervades both books, is the transfiguring force which shatters the dusty status quo.

In TDOC, the watery force is the new

river uncovered by Mallory, which soon grows from freshet to flood. In TDW, the rising seas and monsoons caused by increased solar activity are the vectors of change. Despite a seeming incongruity here—Mallory gives birth to his river; Kerans is the passive pawn of climactic disturbances—in both books the water is explicitly identified with the protagonist in a crucial passage:

"Kerans...stepped out into the lake, whose waters now seemed an extension of his own bloodstream," (TDW, p. 64).

"Its [the river's] waters flowed from my own bloodstream," (TDOC, p. 108).

There could be no clearer explication of the role of water in both books. Both flow from the psyches and life-forces of the protagonists, a kind of exudation from the subconscious that has the power to obliterate the mundane world.

As an outpouring of psychic urges, the water has many guises. In TDW, it can feel greasy or pleasant, be reflective or transparent. Kerans receives an epiphany when submerged, in the flooded planetarium, but also nearly asphyxiates. In TDOC, the river can provide idyllic moments—as when Mallory bathes with Noon in Chapter 15—or it can kill, as when it nearly drowns Mallory in Chapter 10.

Neither exclusively good nor evil, the aquatic powers in both books reflect the mingled creative and destructive urges of the men from whom they flow. The love-hate relationship both men have with their respective fluid mistresses is completely understandable, once one considers the love-hate relationship every person has with their own good and bad traits.

Associated with the waters in both novels is a profusion of exotic flora and fauna. The return of the saurians in TDW is echoed by the portrait of the submerged ore-conveyor as a gigantic lizard in TDOC (p. 107). The lushness of animal and vegetable growth that the river and the rising sea brings is emblematic of the fecundity of the mind, the potential of consciousness to remake the world.

Having said all this, there remain some notable differences between the way water is utilized in the two books. In TDW, the water is saline and hot, providing occasion for a host of uterine references. In TDOC, the new river is cool and fresh, and the amniotic subtext is missing. The rising seas of TDW are a global phenomenon; the river of TDOC is strictly local. (See the section entitled "Society" below.) The fact that the sea, trapped among the London skyscrapers, is generally portrayed as a stagnant "lagoon"—there seem to be no tides—contrasts with the flowing nature of Mallory's river, which only degenerates into "lagoons" at one point (Chapter 22). And finally, the seas are forever, at least on a human timescale, while the river is transitory, doomed from the start.

A final watery speculation: when, near the end of his narrative, Kerans treks southward from London, and sees, in the distance, "a jungle river" (p. 153), is he walking out of one book into the other, across a gap of twenty-five years?

The Dam

Where water flows, it can be dammed.

And to dam the subconscious is to cause a festering wrongness. In TDW, Strangman's draining of the lagoon produces a scummy world where "the magic has gone" (p. 115). In TDOC, the dam changes the river into pools of "disease-infested fluid" (p. 208), creating a "poisoned valley." Both dikes are referred to by the term "barrage," a rather unusual usage of the word, meaning a literal "barring." In TDW, Kerans actively destroys the dam with an explosive charge. In TDOC, Mallory first helps build the dam ("a tourniquet—on my own arm," [p. 185])—an instance where his hate of the river outweighs his love for it—but then, after the barrage ruptures and the river still is not flowing properly, maintains that there is "some kind of obstruction that I can try to clear" (p. 233).

The Insufficiency of Speech

The exteriorization of the protagonist's subconscious reveals itself in the surrealism of the oblique dialogue in the two books. The speech of one character is always at right angles to that of his interlocutor. This stylistic device is more pronounced in TDOC than in TDW (there is actually some attempt at maintaining logic in the latter), but incontestable in both. Consider these passages:

Strangman: "Or are the only memories you have pre-uterine ones?"

Bodkin: "No, I'm afraid I remember nothing. The immediate past is of no interest to me."

Strangman: "What a pity...the trouble with you people is that you've been here for thirty million years." (TDW, p. 83.)

Matsuoka: "Dr. Mallory, are you going to be executed?"

Mallory: "No! Tell Harare I've ordered a new dental amalgam for his men. This time the fillings will stay in...."

Matsuoka: "The fillings...?" (TDOC, p. 10.)

Authority Figures

In TDW, Colonel Riggs represents the remnants of the power structure of a shattered society now huddling in the Arctic regions. Initially friendly to Kerans, he is distanced from him when Kerans decides to remain behind in drowned London. Later, after Kerans blows up the barrage, Riggs becomes an active enemy.

In TDOC, the power is split between two figures, General Harare, the guerrilla, and Captain Kagwa, the police chief. The relationships here are less linear and more mutable. At different times, each man switches roles, becoming alternately enemy and friend to Mallory.

Both Kagwa and Riggs, acting as psychic strictures, attempt to get their obsessed charges to depart the zone of psychic disturbance, and fail.

The differing fates of Riggs and Kagwa—Riggs is evaded and generally ignored by Kerans; Kagwa is executed in self-defense by Mallory—relate to the contrasting socio-cultural matrix of the two novels. (See "Society," below.)

Dreamtime

The dreams of the Triassic which simultaneously plague and intrigue the sensitive

*All page references are to *The Drowned World* (TDW), Berkley, 1966, and to *The Day of Creation* (TDOC), Farrar Straus Giroux, 1988.

characters in *TDW* have their counterpart in *TDOC*, made explicit in Chapter 14, "Out of the Night and into the Dream." Keran's flooded world is simultaneously a projection of his dream and the origin of those visions. Mallory's river is a cavalcade of images and scenery like the passage through some dream landscape, also littered with the dangers of nightmares. The constant labeling of the river as a "fossil" (*TDOC*, p. 101 and elsewhere), like the Triassic references, indicates the ancient sources of both dreams. However, the way in which time is otherwise treated in the two books is quite dissimilar. (See "The Nature of Time" below.)

The Vandalizing of the Quarters

A symbol of the abandonment of the old order is found in both books in almost identical terms. In *TDW*, Kerans and Bodkin sink the test station where they have been conducting their researches (Chapter 6). In *TDOC*, the breeding station of Nora Warrender is tumbled into the expanding river, its foundations undermined (Chapter 12).

In *TDW*, Kerans returns to his hotel suite at the Ritz to find it vandalized by Strangman's crew (p. 132), just as Mallory returns to his house-trailer to find it gutted by Kagwa's soldiers (p. 90). This overturning of their sanctuaries propels both men deeper into their obsessions.

The Floating Vice Den

"At one time the depot ship had been a gambling steamer and floating vice den...its bannisters of peeling gilt shaded by a white clapboard marquee painted with gold tassels and drapery.... The interior of the ship was decorated in a similar pastiche baroque...naked gilt carytids...fake marble...an aerial riot of dusty cupids and candelabra, the grimy brass overlaid with mold and verdigris...scarred parquet flooring...." (*TDW*, p. 84-5.)

"Beneath a sky of electric-blue a group of nymphs swam.... The cheap paint flaked from the ceiling [of]...the water-borne brothel.... The figurine of a naked dancer topped the brass column, and shed her skin of cheap gilt into my right hand...the mildewed mattress...hundreds of decorative scrolls...the dance floor...a canopy [with] its balls and tassels..." (*TDOC*, p. 174-177.)

The Copter

Authority in both novels rides in a mechanism which seems to have sinister, predatory, inhuman connotations for Ballard—the helicopter. In both books, its strafing fusillade is presented as a kind of heavenly scourge, sending mere mortals scurrying for cover.

The Flares

In *TDOC*, the flares fired by Captain Kagwa first save Mallory's life, then threaten it. In *TDW*, Strangman's inexhaustible flare-gun shatters the peaceful world of Kerans, Beatrice and Bodkin, serving as a kind of taunt to the night, a manifestation of Strangman's devilish power.

The preceding currents flow through both narratives, giving them an undeniable

kinship and similarity of purpose. However, a few very important distinctions between the novels do exist. Distinctions that make *The Day of Creation*, I feel, a more interesting work.

Once again, I have ranked the points from most crucial to least.

The Nature of Time

In *TDW*, time is clearly flowing backward. As Bodkin explains (p. 38), the flora and fauna of the earth—man included—is devolving to meet the changing climatological conditions. Perhaps "devolving" is the wrong word, possessing as it does negative connotations. In any case, an "archaeopsychic" movement is underway, causing mankind to become something else.

In *TDOC*, time is plainly treated differently: "We were entering a world without time," (p. 96). Time is not flowing backwards; instead, a channel of no-time has sprung into being, a zone centering on Mallory's river. In Eden, before the Fall, did time exist? Quite possibly not, argues Ballard. (Although the question of how events can follow one another in a linear sequence without time is never answered.)

This pre-lapsarian theme is, I believe, more poignant than that of time flowing backwards—since Eden is always doomed to end—and contributes to the heightened emotional impact of *TDOC*.

This whole issue ties in with the "Society" theme: when the disturbances in the continuum of time are localized, society can continue to exist.

The Nature of Women

The sole female character in *TDW* is named Beatrice Dahl, in conscious homage, I am convinced, to Dante's guide. It is Beatrice who experiences the archaeopsychic urge prior to Kerans, and is supposed to function symbolically as his guide. However, her development is minimal. She is a passive cipher, characterless, fit only to be draped with gems by Strangman and alternately menaced and protected.

In sharp contrast, the native girl Noon in *TDOC* is a real Beatrice-figure, literally leading and guiding Mallory up the river, providing him with sustenance, saving his life a number of times. Where Dahl is ultimately empty, Noon is an impenetrable enigma, unable even to speak English. And whereas it is implied that Kerans and Dahl have been lovers for some time, Mallory does not experience sexual consummation with Noon until close to the end of the narrative, her body remaining an unattainable Grail until then. Noon's ultimate disappearance in the mud-flats at the river's source is further testament to her more-than-human nature. It is intriguing to ponder if Noon is the native woman who visits Mallory's trailer each night in the opening chapter, whose events are the final statement of the whole affair of Mallory's river.

Additionally, the complexity of Nora Warrender and her Amazonian entourage illustrates how Ballard's depiction of and attitude toward women has deepened, along with society's, over the past quarter of a century. The stark savagery of their actions in Chapter 23 sketches a man-less society as effectively as, say, Russ's *The Female Man*.

Again, an advance of technique and substance over the earlier book.

Society

In *TDW*, civilization is effectively over. True, remnants exist at Camp Byrd, but they are ineffective and pitiful. The world as we know it is done for; disaster has overtaken us.

This attitude, I feel, was a manifestation of the '60s. Paradoxically, that era was one of great hope and equally great despair. It seemed quite probable that society would end from any of a number of causes. And that would be a good thing. We wanted to experience any kind of archaeopsychic urge we could. Revolution and change were components of the air we breathed.

Today, 25 years on, we are in another paradoxical plight, without much hope but also somewhat reassured that we will somehow bumble on. Another two decades have passed without nuclear war or ecological collapse, and somehow the end of the world does not look so likely. All the massive shifts in consciousness that were supposed to transform the world have somehow instead made the '80s resemble the '50s.

TDOC reflects this. Its scale and intent are smaller. Mallory's river alters the lives of a few people, then disappears. The world at large goes on oblivious. In this age of diminished expectations, this strikes us somehow as more plausible. And the reduced scale allows for greater intensity of detail.

The power of society in *TDOC* is illustrated by the presence of the media, embodied in the documentary-maker Sanger. Like an irritating insect, he pesters Mallory, constantly reminding him of the world at large and its insatiable appetite for new sensations.

And as mentioned above, the fact that Mallory is forced to kill Kagwa, while Kerans can simply elude Riggs, demonstrates how society in *TDOC* remains a real threat, while simple a sham in *TDW*.

Nakedness

A paradox connected with the issue of society is that in *TDW*, where society is absent, the characters insist on remaining elegantly dressed. (Keran's rumpled suits and stubbled face, amid a tropical landscape complete with alligators, seems a prefigurement of *Miami Vice*, for which Ballard has expressed admiration in his *Interzone* interview.)

In *TDOC*, however, Mallory and Noon, as if in deliberate affront to the powerful society they leave behind, exist mostly naked.

Blackness

Finally, it is instructive to compare the stereotyped black crewmen in *TDW* with the realistic Africans in *TDOC* to see another way in which Ballard's skills of portraiture have sharpened.

Two exhibits separated by twenty-five years.

Are they identical?

You can never step in the same river twice. ■

THE ALIEN CRITIC



Richard E. Geis

It's said the future isn't what it used to be. More accurately, the future isn't ever going to be what it is now, as massive changes in the political economies of most of Europe alter the world's future before our very eyes in ways we cannot predict.

And, of course, altered political economies give birth to radically different social and cultural offspring never conceived before. How are science fiction writers supposed to project coherent, plausible next-generation societies for this world with all this bubbling and boiling going on? It

isn't fair.

A novel written this month can be rendered out of date by events next month. And there is the added danger of offending some radical social/racial/religious group if your hypothetical future turns out to be "insulting" to their dogma or "pride." I can imagine an organized boycott of an SF writer and his offending novel. Certainly Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land* is a case in point from the past; a hard-hitting look at possible near-future religion or genetic alterations of the human gene pool could bring

on a huge controversy in certain powerful social/religious/racial groups.

For instance, what if in a widely read SF novel the author speculated that in the near future it had been definitely proved (and this is hard-core thought crime) that on the average a specific race is 10 percent higher on the intelligence scale than other races? And what if scientists identified the gene or genes responsible, and what if liberals in government wanted to begin mass alterations of the genes of the "lower" races or in the fetus of every newly pregnant woman?

First of all, would any SF publisher today have the guts to publish such a novel, no matter how well written, and secondly, would the resulting furor result in the first thought-crime murder of a writer in this country?

The creation of an orchestrated controversy taken up by the ratings-hungry media in a feeding frenzy would at least result in the ruining of the writer and perhaps the bankruptcy of the publisher. No other writer or publisher would ever again venture into such "sensitive" subject matter again.

Not that they do now.

Sex used to be the obvious no-no of SF, but now social/cultural/racial "controversy" is out of bounds for near-future SF speculation. I'm sure publishers have sensed this kind of literary future and have made it taboo.

There is a place for bold, eye-opening SF novels of this type, but a small press would have to be the venue, and courageous, probably young authors would have to do the writing. In that way, hidden from the mass media, maybe the consequences of such dangerous thinking could be avoided.

Now let me turn to some books I've read recently.

A Thunder on Neptune by Gordon Eklund (William Morrow, 1989, \$18.95) is a fine SF juvenile novel dealing with some very heavy life-affirming concepts and peopled with some interesting adults and kids who deal with real personal crises while coping with extraordinary mankind-alien problems of the first magnitude.

Briefly, newly discovered aliens named the Kith are doing something fundamental and alarming to Neptune, and the only way The Combine (Earth's government after a terrible nuclear war) can investigate is to beam human children down to Neptune's hellish surface as specially designed sluglike creatures.

Eklund does a first class job of bringing to the reader a sense of the *strange and different* when detailing the Kith life, physiology and values, and especially why the adaptability of human youngsters is vital to this mission.

I personally object to the God and Soul elements in the Kith and kin religion/life cycle, but I imagine the librarians and school boards will eat it up as a kind of nice universal affirmation of The Creator.

Mona Lisa Overdrive by William Gibson (Bantam, 1989, \$4.95) is the third novel of a trilogy which uses overlapping sets of flawed, damaged and obsessive characters to explore and detail the central focus, the vast new universe of cyberspace created/opened by linked computer data which can be accessed by the human mind.

You put on a set of electrodes and "jack in" to the matrix. What you "see" is a vast landscape of information nodes and blocks and structures and grids and power. It's an electronic jungle in there. Dangerous as hell.

Cyberspace is the new reality, and it is inhabited and used by information thieves, by artificial intelligences, by raging loci of personality and character from now-dead humans, and by a self-aware matrix itself.

As with *Neuromancer* and *Count Zero*, *Mona Lisa Overdrive* ends with options for more cyberspace novels, and it would be a crime for there not to be more.

William Gibson is simply one of the finest, most talented, most skillful writers in SF, and anything he writes should be read for its power and detail and mind-expanding ideas, as well as for the sublimely raw, polished, infuriating, satisfying people he chooses to inhabit his work.

I haven't touched the plot of *Mona Lisa Overdrive* or its specific characters because to show them is to tarnish them in a sense, to rob you of some of the pleasure in discovering them fresh and unknown.

What I'm saying is: trust me. Jack into this novel and/or the others in this trilogy and you'll be in the grip of a brilliant SF storyteller.

The town of Castleview is so named because of the phantom medieval castle people often see nearby, for no apparent reason. And the town and surrounding countryside are haunted by strange events and "ghosts."

Enter newcomer Will Shields and his family, who seem to trigger a crisis revolving around the phantom castle and its denizens, who easily cross over to our time and reality.

Gene Wolfe, in his latest novel, entitled *Castleview* (Tor, 1990, \$19.95) seems to have written a plain-and-simple, engrossing fantasy, a commercial novel told from multiple points of view in short episodes with cliff-hanger, suspense interruptions.

The bone-and-sinew prose and sympathetic human characters make this a quick and superficially satisfying read. There are puzzles and answers. There is danger but very little graphic violence.

But the ending, the epilogue in particular, raises a new set of questions: Who is Will Shields, really? Is his name significant? Must one read Thomas Mallory's *Morte d'Arthur* to fully understand this novel? Why is Morgan Le Fay's castle so easily accessible? Sigh. Gene Wolfe giveth, and Gene Wolfe taketh away.

God, I thought it would never end.

Clive Barker's *The Great and Secret Show*, *The First Book of Art* is 560 pages of stereotyped, would-be characters thinking interminable, stereotypical thoughts, speaking bad, superfluous dialogue, reacting too often to mind-shattering events with astonishing aplomb and inhuman adaptability.

All this in the context of an unspeakably horrible alien species from beyond the veil attempting an invasion of human reality through a terrifying portal.

In short, Clive Barker is an ambitious bad writer with a big name attempting a monumental saga novel. And Harper & Row is paying him to do it.

Give Barker his due: he has the cour-

age to delve into his subconscious and use the horrors he finds there in his fiction. As demonstrated by H. P. Lovecraft, the horror genre is an exploration of the underside of the human mind, a surfacing of archetypal fears and lusts, enhanced by individual writers' twists and kinks.

The novel starts out well enough as misfit postman Randolph Jaffe, working in the national dead letter office, discovers a secret mystery hinted at in some letters—an Art, a supernatural power technique which will allow its adepts to enter the great sea of dreams (the Quiddity) and reach the idyllic island at its center—which will bring him immortality and supreme power in the human universe.

His quest is ultimately a fatal mistake and the reality behind the Art is too sickening and dangerous for mankind to know.

There are many characters, many story lines, many twists and turns, many fine revelations and horrible creatures and special effects. If only Barker could find the key to revealing real people the reader could care for. His villains are well done with credible evil and naked flaws of character.

And of course the plot too often dictates the responses of the characters and demands they perform with criminal stupidity and lack of forethought, or at superhuman emotional and intellectual levels where they should be paralyzed by shock and fear or in headlong flight to safety.

As when four of his people unreasonably venture down into a labyrinth of deep, unexplored caves without adequate equipment or supplies, and without an assured means of return to the surface. They had time to prepare, but Barker, in ignorance or in the sloppy thinking mode of horror movie directors and script writers, chose to enhance the danger and suspense by cheating.

For those who care, this novel has graphic sex, violence and four-letter words. As it should have.

The life and writings of Philip K. Dick in this marvelously fair and informative biography, *Divine Invasions, A Life of Philip K. Dick* (Harmony Books, 1989, \$25.95) by Lawrence Sutin, raise a host of questions in the minds of other writers, especially SF writers: How much of this madness was from likely temporal lobe epilepsy from birth, how much from childhood emotional trauma, how much from the massive doses of amphetamines and other drugs he took during his prime writing years? Or was he mad? Was his apparent paranoia, his intense metaphysical/religious interests and his experienced messages from God clues and evidences of the truth of a special personal sensitivity to a hidden reality and his individual importance to powers beyond our normal ken who chose him as a Messenger?

Had not Phil Dick possessed enormous intelligence and a high-level writing talent, wouldn't he have ended as just another drug-ridden burnout case in a state mental hospital, diagnosed paranoid schizophrenic? Are SF, fantasy and/or horror writers especially subject to insanity because of their special interest in those areas of writing, or does their special interest spring from the neuroses and madnoses classed as paranoia and schizophrenia?

In Philip K. Dick's case, my judgment

(and this book and his life virtually force the reader to make a judgment) is that his birth, the death of his fraternal twin sister, the early abandonment of the family by his father, the character of his mother, his own inborn character, talents and high intelligence, all formed him into the maladjusted, warped, intense, creative, neurotic/psychotic man who managed to write some of the most brilliant, mind-blowing surrealist novels of our times.

I think his novels and stories were largely "science fiction" by default, because what he wrote best could only be classified and sold in our genre. And I think he found in SF the only venue in which he could work successfully. His lust for mainstream publication and success was a false, mistaken goal because the mainstream literary contemporary character-and-satire content box could not contain his creative bent. His mainstream novels were stunted, inhibited, colorless, unexceptional because he had to write them to fit that box.

It's useless to say, "If only he hadn't abused his mind and body with those unending megadoses of speed, he'd be alive today, writing more masterpieces." But he took drugs because of a complex of internal turmoils, and created his writings out of a complex of intellectual and emotional needs and drives. You cannot honestly, wishfully, hypothetically take one element or gestalt of influences from a person and get an "if only" result.

We are all of us an avalanche, with our conscious self the point rock being pushed irresistibly down the slope of life, bouncing off people and events, sometimes colliding with immovable objects, sometimes shattering, sometimes stopping dead.

Philip K. Dick had a fine, agonizing, erratic, fruitful run. And in this book, Lawrence Sutin has shown us that headlong compulsive, hag-ridden, productive, painful career in as much detail as possible, without blinkers, with kindness.

Among these 17 stories there is probably one in *Harlan Ellison's Angry Candy* (Plume/NAL, 1989, \$8.95) which will make you cry. Harlan got to me with "Paladin of the Lost Hour," the first. I think these stories are a litmus test; you show yourself by the story which most gets to you.

There is variety here: short fun stories, longer pure SF and fantasy, others dealing with the varieties of reality, and still others which ask: "Is there life after death?" and which answer "Yes, many kinds of life ... and many kinds of death after death." In Harlan's universe, life gets complicated.

This is, I believe, his first short story collection in a few years. It's a good one. Harlan Ellison is always in command of his material, is a master of technique and style, and best of all will never bore you. That's worth paying money for.

Finally, after loading this trade paperback's covers with quoted praise and the questions "Is he the best short story writer we've got? Is he the best? The evidence is compelling," the editors and other decision makers at New American Library should have answered "yes" and ordered these stories printed on book paper instead of newsprint.

Mazeway by Jack Williamson (Del

Rey/Ballantine, 1990, \$17.95), is a quasi-juvenile morality tale that I found to be a major disappointment. It paints a simplistic picture of Earth devastated by the collapse of a skyweb of huge orbiting cities after a titanic alien space monster has inadvertently destroyed the complicated anchors and counterweights used to stabilize the web of heavenly habitats.

The boy is Benn Dain, whose homeless family was taken in by the Eldren, a federation of benevolent aliens who took up living space in the outer areas of the solar system and who killed the Seeker, the monster who destroyed Earth's civilization.

The girl is Roxane Kwan, apparently the only living heir to the former world-ruling commercial dynasty known as the Sun Company. She has lived with her father, who leads a band of degenerate barbarians in Africa in a hunted-out former game preserve.

Benn is 21, as I recall, and Roxane is 19. Both virgins, and of course they inevitably meet and fall in love. (Never mind that in the real world he would be warped and neurotic without other human companionship than his mother and father among aliens, and she would have been gang-raped by the time she was 14.)

Mixed into this is Mazeway, an Eldren competition in the huge caverns of a distant planet, which is supposed to test representatives of alien races for worthiness to join the Eldren. Both Benn and Roxane enter to represent humanity.

Let me not forget three individual, menacing aliens who are intent on rendering the Eldren civilization null and void by means of an apparently sentient supercomputer virus, and intent on taking over Earth for deep-mineral looting purposes.

The intelligent, adult reader soon realizes Jack Williamson is writing for preteens and 13-year-olds; that the Earth he pictures is unrealistic, the Mazeway competition is simplistic and shallow, and seems to value only physical ability and no-brain cooperation, and that the conspiracy of the invading alien trio is absurd, as is the idea of looting Earth's bowels for minerals when it is simpler and cheaper to go after the asteroids and moons for whatever minerals are needed.

The legal "agreements," power relationships and authority figures in this novel are laughable and childish. Straight out of *Flash Gordon* and *Disney*.

This story and this kind of science worked in the '40s, but is now so out of date as to be an embarrassment. For Jack Williamson to write a novel like this and for Del Rey/Ballantine to publish it without labeling it for preteens is a serious mistake, as well as a major misjudgment of current teenage and adult readers of SF.

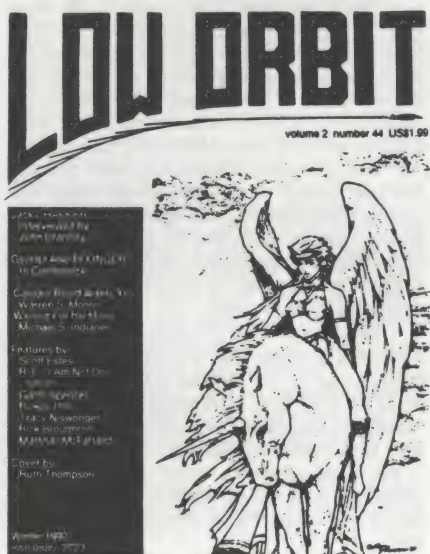
There is no question that *Brain Rose* by Nancy Kress (Morrow, 1990, \$22.95) is adult in the best sense: it deals with complicated, unhappy, multifaceted, very intelligent humans in unusual situations, under extraordinary pressures.

In a convincing near future in which a memory-killing virus-plague has struck the world soon after AIDS has been defeated, in which a new religion allowing unlimited pollution is gaining power, in which homophobia is pandemic and in which a radical new surgery permits the brain to remember

scenes from the previous lives of the present self, this story follows three main characters who have received that surgery—Caroline Bohentin, Joe McLaren, and Robbie Brekke—as they cope with the revelations of their past lives and with each other as they discover shattering truths about themselves and about the world and—dare I say it?—about God, or what seems to be a semi-sentient racial memory.

Reincarnation is the key subject matter, its implications and its consequences. Nancy Kress writes at times with awesome insights and power, and is able to write male viewpoint utterly convincingly. Her people live.

This is SF as it should be written for adults: sophisticated, perceptive, powerfully



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dramatic and insightful, dealing with a what-if question with mind-blowing ramifications and side effects. Wow, will this one grab you and make you think!

I don't like novels which tell the reader in the first chapter that the hero is rich, famous and alive, and then spend the rest of the chapters in one long serial flashback telling the reader how the hero became rich, famous and how he stayed alive. That plot destroys all suspense and 90 percent of the interest. It's like reading the final pages of a book before starting the first page.

Cortez on Jupiter (Tor, 1990, \$3.95) by **Ernest Hogan** is just such a novel. Pablo Cortez is a worldwide sensation, like Picasso at his height of fame and fortune, and is being interviewed by a world-famous woman journalist. The interview is the framework upon which is hung Pablo's life story of rags to riches.

This is the future, and Pablo has barely survived immersion into the sea of alien intelligences known in videoland as the Sirens, which inhabit Jupiter's red spot. All other "Sirenauts" have had their minds scrambled and/or boiled away.

Pablo is a monomaniac, driven by his creative frenzies, the originator of "splatter-painting" in zero gravity, and a natural man who, with his fractured Latino-American expressionistic manner of speaking ("Not only was Norbert Starling suddenly after my hide, but I was now at war with Spaceco. None of the scientists could agree on just what the chingada was going on. Yeah, they had all kinds of loco theories about it all: it was all me being wackisimo, a crazy artist, crazy minority boy, crazy misunderstood misfit; it was a breakthrough into some nuevofangledcyberpsychoautonomelectromagneticneuroextrasensorywhatchamacallit; it wasn't certain, they needed more data; it was all sci-fi televoodooizing.") is a natural resource for the sensation-hungry media eager as ever for Ratings.

Depending on your humor sensitivity, this novel is a malformed, misconceived dud; amusing; funny; hilarious; or a masterful satire. Personally, I find it misconceived and amusing.

This novel is one of Tor's "Ben Bova's Discoveries" line of paperback originals. The cover of this uncorrected proof copy blurbs the book: "The most spectacular first novel since *The Demolished Man*." No, really, it isn't.

Time for me to wend my way back into the bedroom, nose in book (like *Dracula* retiring to his coffin), till next appearance in these pages. Since I've found a competent optometrist and now have a proper set of specs for my bloodshot eyes, reading is now a pleasure again, instead of a bleary, irritating chore. From now on I imagine the lenses will simply become gradually more thick and convex—the fate of many editors, professional readers, and Nintendo addicts. ■

If you'd like a more frequent dose of Richard E. Geis reviews and commentary on SF, fantasy and horror, you can subscribe to his *The Geis Letter*, published approximately monthly, for \$20.00 for 12 issues. \$2.00 sample. Send to Richard Geis, P.O. Box 11408, Portland, OR 97211.

Most serious science fiction fans know of Tom Godwin as the author of more than thirty SF stories and three novels, published in the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s, who is best known for his 1954 story, "The Cold Equations." I knew Tom Godwin, however, as much, much more.

I first met him in the summer of 1961. My parents had left Las Vegas to search for gold in the northwestern Arizona desert. Dad, a dreamer with a multitude of get-rich-quick schemes that always fell through, had bought a "drywasher" from Tom and moved us out there in hopes of finding a new gold mine. Tom and his father were living in a remote area about an hour from the Colorado River and better than two hours from Kingman. The area's sole claim to fame was a worked-out gold mine named King Tut.

At that time, Tom was not only writing, but making and selling his version of a drywasher. Best I can remember, it weighed approximately 50 pounds, folded for ease in carrying, was manually powered, and sold for around \$150.

I can hear you saying, "Who cares about the drywasher, let's get on with the good stuff". That drywasher was important because it was what initially brought us all together. It was the locus of the web Fate spun that rearranged all of our lives and bound us together in a strange and beautiful pattern.

Fate's hand could be seen in the events that led up to our initial meeting. Just a few months before, I'd come across a paperback with a lurid cover and the title, **Space Prison**. By the time I'd finished the first page I was not only mesmerized by the book, but hooked on the still-not-quite-respectable genre of science fiction. I'm still not sure where the book came from, but I remember passing it on to Mom and telling her she simply had to read it. I had no idea I would be meeting its author, and what changes were in store.

I was fascinated by Tom. He had the uncanny knack of making a gawky, precocious twelve-year-old feel comfortable. When he asked for my thoughts and opinions he actually *listened* to them. I was truly impressed when I found out that this warm, gentle man had written that book I'd read only months before. I felt especially honored when he gave me a manuscript of an unpublished novel to read, then asked for my critique.

My mother was equally impressed—she found the courage to leave an unsatisfactory marriage to spend the rest of her life with him.

Tom wasn't a physically attractive man. He had oversized features attached to a terribly malformed body. He suffered from a condition known as kyphosis. His spine had curved and stiffened into a position that made him appear hunchbacked. But his personality so overshadowed his appearance that after a five-minute conversation, no one seemed to notice anything but the bright, articulate man within.

There were many things I didn't learn about him until much later, after Mom and Dad's acrimonious divorce, and their battle over me. For three years I was shipped to various relatives and subjected to less than favorable experiences before finally being allowed to move to Arizona and join Mom and Tom. By the time I moved in with them I

TOM GODWIN: A PERSONAL MEMORY



by Diane Godwin Sullivan

was extremely wary of people. Tom was intensely sensitive to my feelings and set about winning my trust by the one method that would succeed—by allowing me to come to him. To say patience was one of his virtues would be an understatement. He had already decided he wanted me to be his daughter, and I'm sure it was difficult to stand back and reserve the hugs he wanted to share. So he sat back and waited, let me become familiar with him, while he lavished love and attention on Mother. It took over a year, but his patience paid off and I became as attached to him as he was to me. By mutual decision I became his daughter in name also by the legal means of a name change. For me it was a way of putting those years apart behind me, for him it was the

fulfillment of a long-awaited dream.

He never asked me what had happened to make me so bitter and wary—just as well, I wouldn't have been able to discuss it. Instead he began sharing his unpleasant memories of his childhood. It gave us another bond beyond love and trust, that of commiseration. His youth was, by anyone's standards, disastrous. His younger sister died as a result of an accidental shooting. By the age of five he was not only carrying the guilt of her death—he had been playing with the gun that killed her—but his mother had died as well, leaving him to be raised by a father who regularly practiced withering criticisms intended to reduce his self-esteem to zero. After the third grade he was forced to withdraw from school, leaving him with a thirst for knowledge and just enough formal education to find the books that would teach him what was needed to evolve into a literate word-crafter. By the time I first met him, he'd taught himself trigonometry, astronomy, calculus, and as his fans know, writing.

He was a self-deprecating man, unable to accept the fact that others found him witty, intelligent, and charming. The bitter seeds of his youth blossomed into a severe problem with alcohol, one that he controlled while Mother was alive, but allowed to consume him after her death.

He doted on the two of us, never tiring of telling how he'd never loved a woman until he met Mother, and that he not only gained a wife, but also a daughter. He was fond of my older sisters and brother, but they were grown, with families, and I was the child of his heart, sharing the same house and many of the same ideals. He paid us the greatest compliment I could imagine. When he wrote the sequel to **Space Prison**, (also known as **The Survivors**), two of the main characters were based on Mother and myself. In the novel we were portrayed as sisters, but he caught the essence of personality in each of us, and friends who read the novel noticed the characterization without being told.

After I moved in with them, he didn't do much writing. Looking back, it seems as though he was one of those writers whose misery spawned the creation of whole worlds and richly delineated characters. The happier his personal life, the less he wrote. I also have to wonder if economics played a major part. As he liked to say later, he received more money from the anthologizing of a story than from the actual initial publication. With Mom and I to support he spent all his time working at jobs that would bring immediate returns. I'm also sure it was difficult to make the time and privacy that writers seem to need. As any parent knows, having a high-schooler makes tremendous demands on time and energy, as well as the psychological drain of dealing with adolescent highs and lows.

By my senior year of high school I had settled in and become less self-absorbed. It was then that I recognized Dad's drinking problem. Times were lean, and it seemed that Mother's having to return to work to put food on the table affected him deeply. Not only did the amount of alcohol that he consumed increase, but his moods were being markedly affected by it. He would become morose and despondent, his self-pity requiring a great deal of verbal and non-verbal affirmation of our love for him.

Photos: upper left, Tom and Laureole Godwin, June 1963; lower right, Diane Sullivan Godwin, December 1977.

It was then that I began to see the strange dichotomy of the man. He had an almost arrogant assurance when it came to writing. He might not always trust what others said in praise of his own works, but spared no criticism or praise for works he read. The reverse side of that arrogance was his firmly imprinted lack of any sense of personal worth. Even though his father had died four years before, the years of belittlement still haunted him. It could be seen in the sneering curl of his lip when delivering an especially scathing rebuke.

Mother began to acquire somewhat of a haunted look herself. There were nights when she lay next to him, a hand on his chest to feel its rise and fall. Occasionally, he would stop breathing, and she would shake him awake enough to breathe. It may be terrible to admit, but I was relieved to marry and move away.

I'm sure that Dad was relieved, too. One less to feed and clothe surely improved finances, and brought the freedom to try new experiences. Mom and Dad spent two summers in Washington state, literally living in a tent while he worked for the forest service. His letters were long and newsy, carrying a sense of joy I hadn't noticed for awhile. Then, of all things, they tried running a small bar in Dolan Springs. An alcoholic working in a bar is not the best of all worlds. Things seemed to be working out, though, near as I could tell by his letters. By that time I was living in Texas, so I had only his letters to rely on.

The first major hammer-blow came in March of 1971 when Mother had a stroke. I got a desperate letter from him and boarded a bus with my three-year-old. Mother's diabetes was catching up with a vengeance, and Dad was overwhelmed by her disability, as well as the idea that he would have to give her insulin injections. I spent two weeks with them, arranged for a retired nurse that lived a few miles away to take care of her, then headed back for Texas. The next six months seemed to go well. Once again his letters were full of anecdotes about life in the Springs, as well as Mother's improvements. I quit worrying about them and opened each new letter with anticipation instead of dread.

Then, as they say with a dramatic flourish, came the death knell—literally. I got the dreaded two o'clock in the morning phone call that Mother had had a massive heart attack and died. The next morning I was on my way to Kingman, grieving not only for my loss, but for the knowledge of what Mother's death would do to him. The four of us of the immediate family met there.

Dad was devastated. He couldn't make the simplest of decisions. We had to make all the funeral arrangements, as well as clean out the cabin. He insisted on getting rid of all but a minimum of household goods to get by with. We all could see the active death wish, and discussed the probability that we would be back in a few months to bury him. Being the closest to him, I did my best to convince him to come live with me, but he refused. I left with the sure knowledge that my chances of ever seeing him again were extremely small.

As it turned out, I was wrong. It's not often that we are happy to be wrong, but I was. Dad's friends rallied around, and once again I was getting the long letters I'd enjoyed for so many years. His way with words

wasn't limited to the stories and novels he wrote. The words on each page seemed to come to life as he described things, and many times I found myself laughing out loud at the situations he recounted.

I never wrote to him as frequently as he did to me. But that never seemed to deter him. He understood and accepted that I was busy with college and a new family. In fact, as bad as he hated to fly, when I sent him a ticket to come to my college graduation, he came. I'm not sure who was the happiest—me, that I'd survived four years of graduate school, or Dad, that he could finally say "his daughter" had a degree. Once again I tried to talk him into staying with us. I could see that he was doing much more drinking than eating, and that his letters had managed to hide the depths of his unhappiness. And once again, he refused.

The next few years passed much the same. He wrote two or three letters for every one I sent. Occasionally he would mention that he was working on a story, but things didn't seem to be jelling for him. It finally reached the point where I could read between the lines, and once more my sisters and brother and I worried that we would get a call from one of his friends saying he'd stared too closely at his pistol once too often.

When the call came, it wasn't that desperate, but close. He'd lost the cabin because of delinquent taxes and had been taken in by a couple he'd known for years. Unfortunately, his disability checks were being spent on quantities of vodka. His friend had called me because Dad had become extremely ill and he couldn't get him to go to a hospital. Once again I boarded a plane and flew out to see what I could salvage.

I was shocked by his appearance. While Mother was alive, even though he had the terrible curvature of his spine, he'd been robust. That day is engraved in my memory. He was a shadow of himself, his arms and legs so thin they seemed only skin overlying bone. I'd been a nurse long enough to know he'd very nearly accomplished the difficult feat of drinking himself to death. I didn't give him a choice. I packed up his remaining possessions, loaded him on a plane, and took him to Texas. Debilitated as he was, he still thought first of his typewriter, so it was shipped the day before we left.

Thank God for airplanes. If we'd had to spend two days on a bus, I don't think he would have made it. As it was, within twelve hours of his arrival, I had him in an Emergency Room. Two hours later I was following the ambulance carrying him to the Dallas V.A. Hospital.

Three days later he was home again. We'd caught his gastrointestinal bleeding just in time. The booze had done a thorough job, though. His liver function was barely enough to keep him alive, and his alcohol-induced anemia would have to be supported with large quantities of folic acid and a well-balanced diet. I knew the doctor was wasting his breath when he told Dad that any further liquor consumption would mean his death warrant. I just felt lucky that Dad was allowing me a chance to attempt to change his mind and give him something to live for.

The first six months went well. Having a house full of grandchildren seemed to perk him up. He even went fishing with us, and once the kids actually got him into the river

with them. I found that astounding—I was the only one who knew he couldn't swim! I'd hear him pounding away at his typewriter and felt the first real hope that he'd be selling words again. I'll be the first to admit that I was extremely proud to be the daughter of the man who wrote "The Cold Equations." I believed implicitly in his talent, and was delighted to see him using it.

That happiness was all too brief. The level in the bottles of liquor we had in the cabinet kept falling, then the bottles would disappear. I tried to compromise by buying him a six-pack of beer on the weekends, but that didn't work, either. As his liquor intake went up, our quality of life went down. He began staying in his room, avoiding the family. His roll-your-own Prince Albert cigarettes were leaving large burn-holes in the sheets. Life became so miserable that when he announced that he'd made arrangements to move to Nevada, I was relieved. In fact, things had become so strained and so argumentative that I was downright happy to put him on a bus. I finally admitted that I couldn't give him the one thing that he needed to be happy—Mom.

The letters from Beatty were few and strained, and I found myself wishing I'd never brought him home. The arguments and the tears had put a distance between us that hurt, desperately. Perhaps we could have recaptured that early love and trust, but time was against him. Before an emotional healing could take place, his heart gave out.

The physician's assistant in Beatty had become his friend, and rode with him in the ambulance to the hospital in Las Vegas. Three weeks later, the physician's assistant returned to Las Vegas with a different patient, and tried to find out how Dad was doing. At a time when he was alone, surrounded with strangers, unable to communicate, Dad had died. His wallet had disappeared and no one had known whom to contact. His body had been sent to a funeral home to be held for thirty days pending acknowledgement of kin and was scheduled to be buried at county expense. Once the physician's assistant had ferreted out this information he hurried home and called me. I couldn't really grieve. I knew that Dad was finally happy, finally at peace—he was once again with Mother.

I flew to Las Vegas in time for the graveside service. Thanks to his Veteran's status—he'd spent a few months in the Army before his back became so bad they discharged him—his felt-covered coffin was mercifully hidden beneath the folds of an American flag.

I cried then. Not for Dad; I knew his loneliness and inner torment were gone. I cried for me. There would be no more of the wonderful pictures his letters created in my mind. I also cried for the waste. His marvelous talent had been cut short.

I cry again as I write this. Tom Godwin, born June 6, 1915; died August 31, 1980. He left powerful words to stir hearts; stories that live on and enchant not only those who read them for the first time, but those who've read them time and time again. Self-educated, he wrote well enough for his stories to be used in college and high school textbooks as a lesson in word-crafting and characterization. For a man of small physical stature and even smaller self-esteem, he left awfully big shoes to fill. ■

There are too many readers (and writers) who seem to feel that physical phenomena are all that are important in the creation of science fiction. Those tend to discount fantasy entirely, as taffy candy for the mind, simply because fantasy deals at times with nonphysical matters.

Yet, the best science fiction deals with many things other than the physical. And fantasy antedates SF by millennia, containing within its long bibliography a record of the workings of the human imagination. Both genres are valuable tools for teaching both facts and principles, as well as for opening the minds of readers to possibilities they had not dreamed of.

It is shocking to many when it is pointed out that nothing we know except the natural world would exist without imagination. To create an animal-skin covering to keep off the wet, some prehistoric mind suddenly blinked into action and imagined such a drastic and original step. To create an electric light, a human mind had to imagine that such a thing could be done. To send probes to Mars, the concept had to appear first in the human imagination. Modern Fundamentalists to the contrary, imagination is a positive, not a negative, force in the lives of our kind.

For one who intends to use his own imagination for writing science fiction in any of its incarnations (including fantasy), there is a best possible progression through which to pursue that goal. Scientific knowledge is part of that, but it is by no means enough by itself. A writer of imaginative stories has to break free of the paradigms we know, of the limitations of perception that are a part of our culture.

Let us begin with science itself. It is not an entity. It is not a holy religion ministered by scientist-priests. It is a method of investigating the phenomena that surround us, both on our world and as inhabitants of the Universe.

The first scientists were metaphysicians, starting from scratch. They knew very little about the composition of matter, the movements of the bodies in the heavens, the motive powers that kept everything working.

But they thought about what they saw. They observed people and things intently, and they created hypotheses that seemed to explain the things about which they wondered. The scientific method not yet having been invented, their guesses were wide-ranging and included many things that are no longer respectable for scientists to investigate.

But they laid the groundwork for everything that has developed since, step by slow step, over several thousand years. The alchemist fathered chemistry. The astrologer tracked planets, discovered stars, mapped heavenly movements, and his work became the basis of astronomy.

Philosophy formed the foundation of every theoretical system from sociology to psychology, and those who developed mathematics from its most basic and necessary roots laid the groundwork for quantum physics. The present stands squarely on the shoulders of the past, although our historically illiterate generation seems ignorant of this.

It helps for the writer to understand that. There are many intellectual fads and prejudices in our society, not the least of which exist among those whose initial interest

FROM METAPHYSICS TO MARS



Ardath Mayhar

should be the pursuit of truth, whatever that may turn out to be. If a writer subscribes, unthinkingly and unknowingly, to those canned opinions, he limits drastically his potential for doing original and unusual work.

If we are to get to Mars, as writers, we have to understand the concepts of metaphysics. Otherwise we will write shallow stuff that has no underlying basis of historical reality or psychological truth.

Whether or not we ever use metaphysics, in the classical sense, in our work, the knowledge of the questioning nature of Man, the intricately interlaced systems that form our Cosmos, the open-endedness of investigation should form a part of our personal stance as we go about creating stories about other worlds "out there" or inner worlds of mysticism and magic.

We must create a kind of reality, whether it is based on scientific findings or on the needs in our species that created religion and magic. Our systems, within our stories, have to be logical in their own contexts.

An understanding of human psychology is as necessary for this as is an understanding of planetary mechanics or any other physical phenomenon. Too much science fiction, these days, is slick physics or engineering expertise forming the basis of a TV-quality plot, walked through by cardboard characters.

In contrast, a book like Ben Bova's *Millennium*, which is lived by real people who have their roots in the culture of our world as it is and has been, is an experience, not a "good read." A fantasy novel like Lillian Stewart Carl's recent *Wings of Power* con-

tains not only finely crafted prose and real people as its characters, it also draws on an understanding of the cultural roots and philosophies of the "alternate" Indian subcontinent on which it takes place.

The element adding both depth and strength to both books is that comprehension of human psychology, philosophy, and history, the metaphysics of the books making them work to their highest potential.

So what of Mars?

Although the actual discoveries by probes on the surface of the Red Planet show a far different sort of world from that he imagined, Ray Bradbury's Mars will remain, I suspect, the Mars many readers will retain in their minds. He used his deep understanding of the ways of our world to create a delicate balance of history and character, of dream and intuition that made a world so real that it created its own actuality.

When one of us sits down to create a world that never was, we must compete with the Master. And to do that requires much more than a knowledge of the physical aspects of the thing. The spectrum of light, the kind of sun, the gravitational pull, the presence or absence of moons, the balance of elements forming its soil, the mineral content of its oceans are important, it is true, but those are things that are the merest background to the story we must tell. Going into intricate detail about the physical aspects of a nonexistent world is not only fantasy, it is dull fantasy.

It will be the people who walk there, the ways in which they deal with the situations they face, the reality of their personalities in action and interaction that will determine whether or not we have succeeded in our attempt. They must be rounded human beings, rooted, as we all are, in the world we know and carrying a cargo of preconceptions, prejudices, talents, attitudes, and conflicts with them to this new world.

Psychology is a term for one aspect of metaphysics. Studying it in a textbook is a very poor and second-hand way of learning about people. Poetry is better, beginning with Sappho and ending in the present. History is better yet, if you can find contemporary diaries and letters, untouched by the heavy hands of academics.

But best of all is listening and watching. In stores, in buses, in professional offices and planes and washaterias. The metaphysics of a redneck chauvinist are best understood by listening to him describe his treatment of his uppity wife to a sympathetic companion as he waits for his (one-person) wash to cycle.

The metaphysics of an epicene diletante are best understood by remaining sober at a cocktail party and listening to his/her conversations with others of that ilk.

Such knowledge can be gathered easily, if we keep our ears open and our memories sharp. Our treasury of character elements, each with its own historical/metaphysical background, can be counted over as we wait for red lights or buses or fly from Houston to Baltimore.

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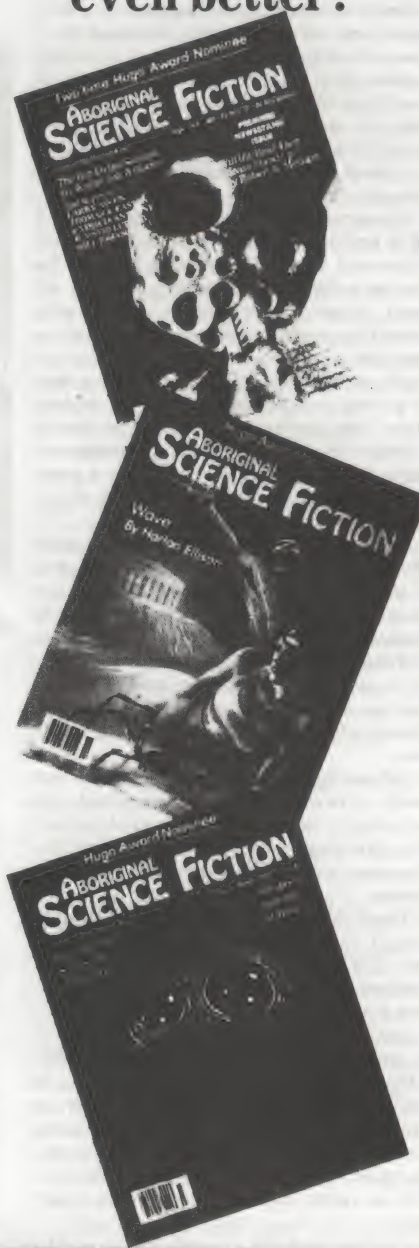
The Dec.-Nov. 1989 issue (on sale in October) is our special blasphemy issue and features Nebula-winner James Morrow with "Bible Stories for Adults No. 31: The Covenant" and humorist Esther Friesner with the "The Doo-wop Never Dies."

The Jan.-Feb. 1990 issue (on sale in December) will kick off a three-part special featuring Frederik Pohl and artist Frank Kelly Freas, who have teamed up for "The Gateway Concordance" — a history of humanity's contact with the Heechee made famous in Pohl's Hugo- and Nebula winning *Gateway* novels. Joining Pohl in the Jan.-Feb. 1990 issue will be Nebula winner George Alec Effinger with "No Prisoners."

"The Gateway Concordance" will continue in the March-April and May-June 1990 issues along, with many other stories by David Brin, Michael Swanwick, Richard Bowker, Bruce Bethke, Jennifer Roberson, and many, many others.

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HYPERION by Dan Simmons (Foundation, 1989, 482 pp., \$8.95, ISBN 0-385-26348-1)

THE FALL OF HYPERION by Dan Simmons (Foundation, 1990, 517 pp., \$8.95, ISBN 0-385-26747-9)

Reviewed by Doug Fratz

With only a single fantasy novel to foreshadow his talent, Dan Simmons burst onto the scene in 1989 with three startlingly different books whose only commonality was being, one and all, fiction of the highest caliber.

Simmons' first novel, *Song of Kali*, won the World Fantasy Award when published in 1985. Then, for three years, silence. In 1989, in a matter of just a few months, there appeared three ambitious and stunning new books by Simmons: *Carrion Comfort*, a horror novel; *Phases of Gravity*, a contemporary literary novel with SF overtones; and, *Hyperion*, a remarkably ambitious far-future SF novel.

Those who read *Hyperion* when it was published in hardcover/trade paperback last year quickly realized that what they had just read was actually the first part of a long novel, and that they would have to wait many long months to read its conclusion. *Hyperion* set the scene and presented many a mystery, but explained not a single one, ending without warning in mid-plot. (It is indeed a testimony to the quality of this work that, even though this fact was totally unmentioned in the publisher's cover copy, so few complaints were heard.)

Finally, in March this year, *The Fall of Hyperion* was released in hardcover/trade paperback, simultaneous with the mass market paperback edition of *Hyperion*. It was billed by the publisher as the "sequel" to the first book, and gained immediate notoriety for having page 306 twice and no page 305. (For several months, it was almost impossible to find in Washington-area bookstores.) It was actually the second half of the novel begun with *Hyperion*.

The *Hyperion* books are set more than 500 years in the future in an interstellar human empire called The Hegemony. *Hyperion*, a non-Hegemony planet, has on its surface the strangest artifacts even discovered by man: the Time Tombs, a group of gigantic temples and shrines which are apparently traveling backwards in time, and are reported to be haunted by a horrible alien creature called the Shrike, around which a "religion" has been formed.

REVIEWS BOOKS, ETC.

The entire first book consists primarily of the individual stories of five of the seven pilgrims sent to *Hyperion* and the Time Tombs, which are believed to be about to "open," releasing the Shrike. Each of these stories is engrossing in and of itself, and each lends scattering of details which begin to build a fascinating picture of the complex future Simmons has created for these books.

The Fall of Hyperion begins the moment *Hyperion* stops, and, with the exception of a few paragraphs and sentences here and there obviously added to help readers who may have forgotten some occurrences in the first book, is obviously simply the second half of a very long single novel. More and more is slowly revealed about The Hegemony, *Hyperion*, the Shrike, the artificial intelligences of the Technocore, and the events of the past four centuries. Both the information revealed and the methods Simmons uses to reveal the information are clever and intricate. These books may indeed represent the most ambitious and successful work of far-future SF since Gene Wolfe's *The Book of the New Sun*.

As with Wolfe's books, the experience of reading the *Hyperion* books is so engrossing, so compelling both emotionally and intellectually, so successful despite being so ambitious, that one is embarrassed to nit-pick. So what if the best explanation Simmons could come up for the Shrike to have a monstrous tree of thorns, complete with impaled, agonizing humans, makes no scientific sense? Who cares if the Technocore's evil plan to exist within the minds of millions of vegetating human slaves is equally lacking in scientific verisimilitude? It all fits together into a puzzlework so marvelously inventive that such signs of straining to make some pieces fit can surely be tolerated.

If you haven't read the *Hyperion* books yet, do so now. Hard SF doesn't get much better than this.



SECOND CONTACT by Mike Resnick (Tor Books, 1990, 277 pages, \$17.95, ISBN 0-312-85021-2)

Reviewed by Mark J. McGarry

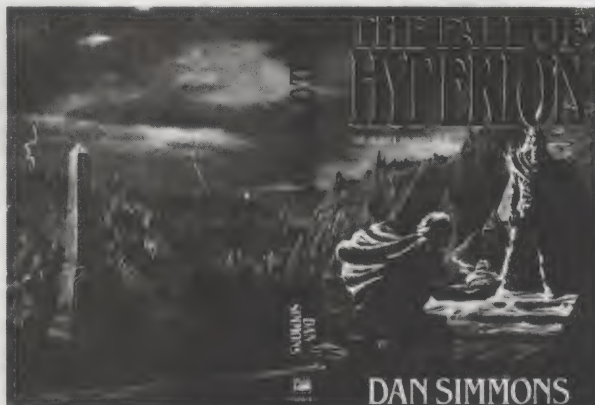
Second Contact is a quick read, a sketchy novel unimpeded by character development, complexities of plot or theme, or a setting with any depth or originality.

Resnick's premise is promising enough. As prologue, a starship makes first contact with an alien vessel near Epsilon Eridani and, inexplicably, the ships destroy each other within moments. The aliens are never heard from again. Then, thirteen years later, the captain of a U.S. starship kills two of his crew, claiming they were aliens. There is no evidence to support his claim and he is thought to be insane. The government wants a quick trial and a speedy resolution to an embarrassing incident.

The protagonist is Max Becker, the Air Force lawyer assigned to defend the captain in court martial proceedings. Becker begins gathering evidence, intending to shake Commander Wilbur Jennings' delusions and convince him to plead insanity to the murder charges. But Becker soon comes to believe that some shadowy force is trying to prevent him from learning the truth about the murders aboard the *USS Theodore Roosevelt*—by killing him, if necessary. Becker gradually learns the truth, dodging bullets all the while.

The resolution is completely predictable, which is particularly unfortunate because Resnick travels a straight line to reach it. *Second Contact* doesn't have much else going for it either. Resnick takes only a token stab at sketching in the world of a century hence, characterization is nonexistent and the writing is pedestrian—although counting the incidence of the phrase "he said wryly" does provide some unintended diversion.

So do the methods of a computer whiz Becker recruits to his cause. Faced with the problem of finding a bit of classified information—the city where a military officer is stationed—Becker's friend defeats the computer's security programming by asking if the officer lives in any of a number of cities, going down the list until the computer stops answering "no" and comes back with "classified." The technique owes less to Robert Tappan Morris Jr. penetrating Milnet than to



Kitty Carlisle's performance on "What's My Line?"

Resnick would seem to be capable of better, judging from his Hugo Award-winning short story, "Kirinyaga." He can hardly do worse than *Second Contact*.



ONLY BEGOTTEN DAUGHTER by James Morrow (William Morrow, 1990, 312 pp., \$19.95, ISBN 0-688-05284-3)
Reviewed by Doug Fratz

In *Only Begotten Daughter*, James Morrow sets his satirical sights on Western theology, and strikes a direct hit on a target most often simply ignored in science fiction.

The novel is the more or less contemporary tale of Julie Katz, authentic daughter of God, miraculously born to an eccentric Jewish man who lives alone in an old Atlantic City lighthouse. Julie spends much of her growing years trying not to be found out, and therefore not meet the same fate her "brother" did some 2,000 years earlier.

Although Morrow works primarily according to the conventions of literary satire, he clearly identifies himself as an SF insider through an uncommon insight into the philosophy of modern science. He indeed has Julie decide early in the book that 20th Century science provides the best paradigm for theological thought. Morrow compares science to religion because both can be seen to play the same role in human affairs, despite their diametrically opposed methods and bases—empirical evidence and the scientific method as opposed to absolute, unquestioning belief.

Julie discovers science primarily through a college boyfriend named Howard. Conversations such as the following demonstrate Morrow's understanding of science and scientific philosophy:

"The observable universe is ten billion light-years in size, correct? she asked Howard. "Or, as Dirac observed, ten followed by forty zeros times as large as a subatomic particle. But look, the ratio of the gravitational force between a proton and a electron is also ten followed by forty zeros. That implies a designer, I think. Maybe even a caring, personal God."

He examined her with a mix of irritation and pity. He sucked his lips inward. "No, it simply means the cosmos happens to be that size right now."

Indeed. (Although I think it is actually

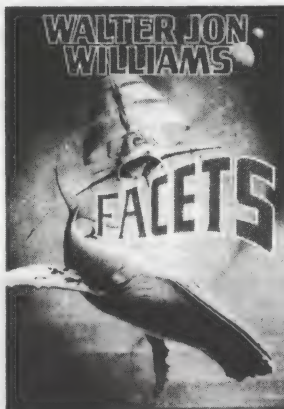
the ratio between the gravitational and electrical forces of the proton and electron that is ten to the fortieth—but that's just proofreading.) Later, Howard waxes eloquently enthusiastic about the importance of science:

Explaining the universe in Greek restaurants, Howard exuded a boundless passion. "What most people don't realize is that something unprecedented has entered the world. Bang—science—and suddenly a proposition is true because it's true, Julie, not because its adherents have the biggest churches or the grandest inquisitors or the most weeks on The New York Times best-seller list." His eyes paced their sockets like caged animals. "Earth orbits the sun. Microbes cause disease. The kidney is a filter. The heart is a pump." His voice built to a crescendo, making head turn. "At long last, Julie, we can know things!"

Actually, strong armies have more often held sway over the millennia than grand inquisitors, but you know what he means. But lest you think Morrow blindly pro-science, I should point out that Howard soon turns out to be less than enlightened in other respects, and subject to the same hypocritical shortcomings as virtually all of the characters in the book.

Julie's decisions and their consequences are only occasionally believable, of course, but the story is always interesting and never predictable, with Morrow's stinging wit always ready to pounce.

If there is anything disappointing with this book, it is that Morrow often seemed to get side-tracked in simply telling an amusing story instead of adhering to his theme, and didn't take a clearer stand on some of the more perplexing conundrums inherent in the religious worldviews he presented. Still, *Only Begotten Daughter* has more than enough to keep the diligent reader enlightened and amused.



FACETS by Walter Jon Williams (Tor Books, 1990, 321 pages, \$18.95, ISBN 0-312-85019-0)

Reviewed by Mark J. McGarry

Walter Jon Williams has been kicking around for several years, drawing some acclaim for novels such as *Angel Station* and *Hardwired*. It was the latter, and a few chromed stories, that has in some quarters gotten him a reputation for being a minor cyberpunk or, less charitably, a camp fol-

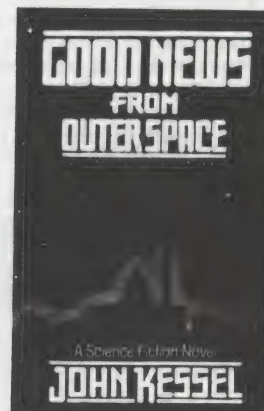
lower. This has always seemed rather unjust to those of us who feel *Hardwired* was one of the best novels of the last five years, mirrorshades carping aside.

Facets has among its nine stories a quantity of cybernetics-themed works, but, as the title suggests, should demonstrate to the unconverted that Williams writes well across a wide spectrum.

Facets leads off with "Surfacing," nominated for the Hugo Award for best novella of 1989. Williams weaves together the story of: a human scientist driven to communicate with the enigmatic Deep Dwellers that live in the oceans of Las Madras; a second researcher periodically possessed by an alien scientist and hell-raiser who lives on the other side of an *n*-dimensional interface; intelligent whales; drunken binges; and, a corpse hung upside down in a smokehouse. Some of the components are a little shopworn, but the triangle between the male scientist, the woman scientist and the Kyklops who dominates her is genuine enough to be a bit disturbing. As with the Deep Dwellers, there is a lot going on beneath the surface, although Williams does not quite bring it together at the end.

The best story in the book is only nominally fantasy: "No Spot of Ground," wherein Edgar Allan Poe survives what might have been his last drunken binge and later becomes a general in the Confederate Army, leading a brigade nicknamed the Ravens. Williams convincingly paints the confusion and hopelessness of the battlefield, but it is the subtle touches that make the story haunting, from the dead girl who reminds him that "amid all this unnatural slaughter...a natural death was possible" to the final scene with Poe's slave, whom he—and the reader—had seen as comfortably one-dimensional.

There are seven other stories, two of them rather weak and mercifully short, as well as an introduction by Roger Zelazny, who is likely correct when he predicts great things for Williams.



GOOD NEWS FROM OUTER SPACE by John Kessel (Tor, 1989, 402 pp., \$18.95, ISBN: 0-312-93178-6)

Reviewed by Pascal J. Thomas

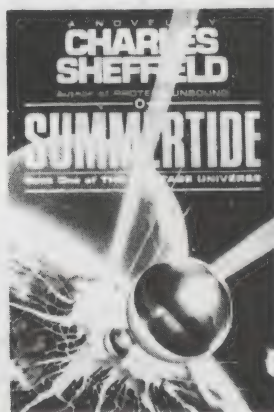
Progress does not always adroitly direct its giant strides: and so two of this book's main characters, George and Richard, work for an interactive-TV version of the *National*

Enquirer called Home Confidential Report. There is very little technological change in this world from ten years hence, though, and the main one occurs when George's wife, Lucy, has him revived. Such a past-death experience is enough, perhaps, to get George finally to believe in the article he was churning out for his network; and he goes on a wild-goose chase for the extra-terrestrials he firmly believes are infiltrating mankind.

While the book's opening chapters are uproarious, with the punch of a near-future *Doonesbury*, it gets steadily more dramatic as the plot develops and becomes more complex. We follow four protagonists, and the main threads of the action are interspersed with unconnected but masterfully written vignettes (some of which were published as short stories e.g. "Mrs. Shummel Exits A Winner").

For his own vision of the year 2,000, Kessel has tapped the vast reserves of irrationality still present in American society; millenarists of the second millennium roam a land laid waste by economic recession. Tellingly, most of the action is set in the South, present-day land of Elvis worship and TV preachers. Kessel's creation, Jimmy-Don Gilray, is hardly more amazing than, say, Oral Roberts; but he's set against a background of (somewhat unlikely) massive social decay, which allows him to acquire a much more frightful power over his followers. And those, despite Gilray's differences with the press, are the same kind of people who plug into Home Confidential Report, simply because, having lost any reasonable hope, they must place their hope in the unreasonable.

This rather long novel does not always sustain the excitement of its opening chapters; but Kessel needs the space to follow the highs and lows of belief, doubt and revelation undergone by his characters. Like Kim Stanley Robinson, Kessel writes about our world in thin disguise rather than about some future trends; he is more satirical about it, with a nastier and more baroque view of things. Like Robinson however, Kessel is a talented writer, and this book should not bore anyone, and delight most readers.



SUMMERTIDE by Charles Sheffield (Del Rey, 1990, 257 pp., \$17.95, ISBN: 9-345-36038-9)

Reviewed by Steven Sawicki

This is a hard science fiction novel revolving around a pair of twin planets, Opal

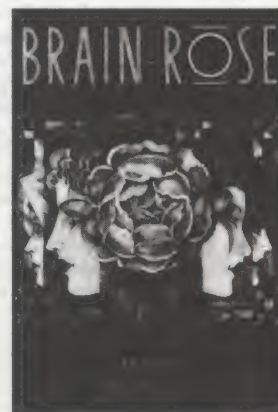
and Quake, which inhabit an orbit that produces regular devastation to both. A devastation called Summertide by those few colonists hardy enough to populate the system. And if that weren't bad enough, every 350,000 years there's a grand conjunction of the system's planets which makes Summertide extremely violent.

Adding to the above, Sheffield includes a long-vanished alien race called the Builders who've left behind mysterious artifacts—no two of which are similar. Of course one of these artifacts, *The Umbilical*, forms a transportation system linking the twin worlds and also serves as the draw around which the novel's characters flock.

And what a cast they are; Max Perry, burned-out administrator of the twin worlds; Hans Rebka, galactic trouble-shooter assigned to find out what's wrong with Perry; Professor Darya Lang, the expert on the Builders, who has a hunch concerning the Umbilical and the Summertide; Louis Nenda, a combination rogue/bounty hunter who serves a strange alien race; Atvar H'sial, the representative of a different alien race who travels with her interpreter underling, yet a third alien; and Julius Graves, councilor, in search of murderers. Why each of these individuals appears at Opal, a planet not known for attracting visitors, within a day of each other sets the stage for the novel's action. It also adds to the problems of Hans Rebka, the book's protagonist, must deal with.

Summertide works well on a number of levels. The pure science of Opal and Quake is a joy to discover, the various Builder arti-

facts are interspersed liberally throughout and provide a constant wonder and sense of strange, and the interplay of the characters—each with something to hide and something to find—provides enough mystery and suspense for two books. Sheffield's ability to blend these into a coherent whole at a pace that literally races along makes this a thoroughly enjoyable book. As a final note it should be mentioned that this is book one on the heritage universe. I, for one, will be looking forward to book two.



BRAIN ROSE by Nancy Kress (Morrow, 1990, 324 pp., \$22.95, ISBN: 0-688-09452-X)
Reviewed by Dean R. Lambe

It's 2022. Do you know where your ancestors are? A lot of people want to find out, wish to be "plazzed" so they are linked to the over-memory, the racial collected experience of Man. In Rochester, NY, a "ship of fools" collection of memory seekers, of reincarnation patients, gains extended self-realization at the hands of neurosurgeons in the Previous Life Access Surgery Institute.

Poor little rich girl, Caroline Bohentin, incestuous daughter of famous actor Colin Cadavy, hopes for insight into her past and her own child's tortured present. Little Catherine, Caroline's daughter by the next governor of New Jersey, suffers from MFRD, the second major slow virus plague to strike the 21st Century. While AIDS still decimates third world nations, and gay bashing has locked the closet door again, the material culture is beset with a terrible memory disease, where victims soon lose themselves in an eternal present. From her hospice, Catherine writes her mommy the same note, day after day after day.

For young cat burglar Robbie Brekke, however, the Rochester PLAS clinic seems a way toward fame and fortune, or so hopes the crime czar who has paid his entry fee.

Bigoted attorney Joe McLaren seeks remission from multiple sclerosis, a positive side effect of PLAS treatment. As Caroline and Robbie begin to recall past lives, however, Joe finds the Byzantine world of over-memory as dangerous and intertwined as the Washington, D.C., political scene that Joe knows so well.

Convuluted threads, diverse histories, all twist and writhe toward a truly incredible conclusion. The "racial memory biosphere" recalls both Jungian synchronicity and Teilhard de Chardin's noosphere, but the

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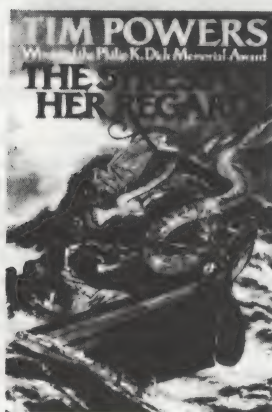
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ambitious whole falls through a neurological event horizon. Like the Snark, it silently and suddenly vanishes away.

For Kress, author of well-received fantasies and as deft with place and character as any reader could wish, well, she's simply one of those who should not write science fiction. The science here, the neurology, the psychology, the physical anthropology, the molecular biology, all glitter like juggled crystal spheres, only to shatter into shards of misunderstanding. Karl Pribram's holographic model of individual mind might support such notions of racial over-memory interference patterns, if the data supported such a model, or if Kress hadn't turned physical holography backwards. From the improbable laser hand guns to the puzzling aircars, through upside down genealogy that has us all "once Chinese," past sexual orgasm as epileptic seizure, to the casual neural salad of Korsakov's confabulation sprinkled on famous McGill University amnesia patient "H. M.," the facts are slippery indeed.

Which is a shame, for there's marvelous sociology here, and fresh creativity. But no brain rose. Still, stems and thorns from a writer like Kress merit attention.



THE STRESS OF HER REGARD by Tim Powers (Ace, 1989, 392 pp., \$17.95, ISBN: 0-441-79055-0)

Reviewed by Pascal J. Thomas

Michael Crawford is a young doctor in early 19th-Century England, specializing in childbirth, ready to put his past misfortunes behind and engage into a new life with a lovely young wife. A supernatural encounter during a drunken night, and the vengeful character of his bride's sister, will change everything. Crawford's commerce with otherworldly creatures will lead him to Switzerland and Italy, where his trail will repeatedly cross those of Byron and Shelley not to mention encounters with an unexpected French poet.

Powers has come back to the early 19th century British literary milieu he used in *The Anubis Gates*; this time, however, William Ashbless is hardly ever mentioned and historical figures—Byron and his entourage—take center stage. In a sense, the real hero of the book is the elusive pursuit of poetic talent, a dangerous endeavor since Powers makes the muses into very real demons, creatures that partake of vampires and the

Bible's nephelim. For those who have it in them to write poetry—Byron, Shelley, Keats for example—they act as a potent source of visions, a 19th-Century analog to drugs in 60's rock music.

Of course, making the feverish verse of the English romantics into the factual relation of gory supernatural episodes may seem like a trivialization of the literary act. I'd rather see it as one more instance of literalization, a tried and true science fictional device: constructing a plausible-sounding explanation for happenings which mainstream literature would consign to metaphor. Powers uses the supernatural symbiosis to bring outside the inner conflict many artists feel between the demands of their work and those of their mundane family life. Shelley and Byron are excellent subjects for this, and the novel is cleverly tailored to fit their lives. Fantastic events, at any rate, are much more than a mere device in Powers's hands: they are always explained by detailed, inventive theories à la Lovecraft, mixing a good dose of baroque imagination with various folk or mythological tales, and even some tongue-in-cheek pseudoscience and political history: thus the Italian Carbonari's real foes are revealed as the *Siliconari*, an atrocious pun Powers gets away with through sheer fast-talking brilliance. (Despite his newly-acquired "fantasy" label, by the way, Powers steers closer to SF here than in the SF-labeled *On Stranger Tides*.)

This is a longer book than Powers' previous one, spanning more years with fewer plot turnabouts. The need to follow historical facts about Byron and Shelley may

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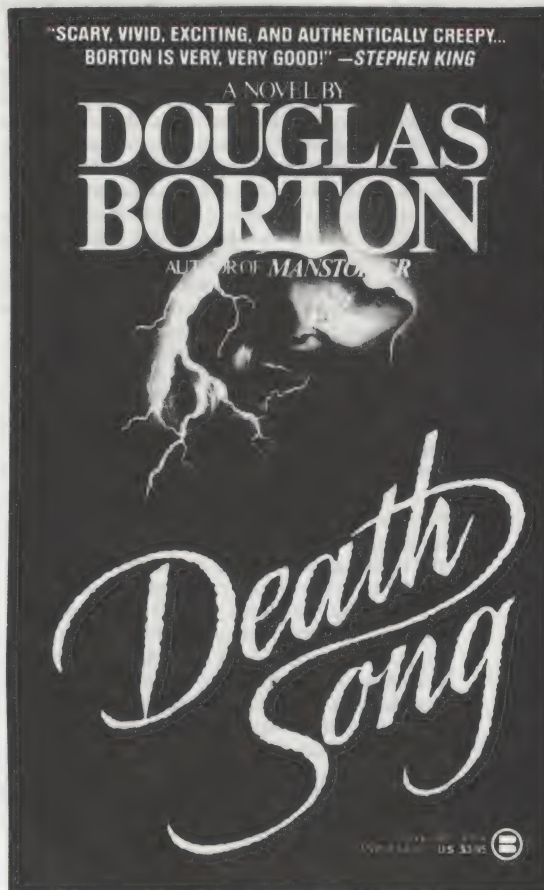
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be one reason, but more important is the need to bring about the major changes Crawford undergoes in his body and his life, from Geneva to Pisa by way of Rome and Venice, and to make him fall in love in the most unexpected way. On *Stranger Tides*'s John Chandagnac did not emerge unscathed, but fought to return to his rightful place in society; the changes in Crawford are deeper, irreversible. Powers is playing in a new register, giving up the Alexander Dumas-type adventure novel for a more mature, more complex kind of work. He has lost nothing of his imagination and storytelling abilities, and this book seems to me his best so far.



DEATHSONG by Douglas Borton (New American Library, 1989, 287 pp., \$4.95)
Reviewed by Danny Reid

Douglas Borton has written a horror novel which, if you squint your eyes a little, looks an awful lot like "The Minions of Evil Meet Country-and-Western Music." Depending on your tastes, we could be talking really scary stuff here. Alas, *Deathsong* is not a particularly scary book, but it does have some decidedly effective scenes. Light in logic but heavy with carnage and gore, *Deathsong* is enjoyable to the extent the reader is willing to not poke too strongly at the threads holding it together.

The central premise is that there exists today a secret cult which has endured from the time of Sumeria, 4,000 years ago. The cultists worship a Lovecraftian set of gods

which languish in an other-dimensional limbo, having been placed there by another set of higher beings. The cultists possess deadly magical spells in the form of short songs. If the right song—the Deathsong—is ever sung, out come the old gods and all the accompanying chaos and death.

Billie Lee Kidd is the modern country-and-western singer who has the misfortune to have the Deathsong revealed to her. She thinks it's just another song that came in a dream, but when she performs it during a concert at which one of the cultists is present—fanatical cultists like country-and-western music, too—the process is set in motion for hell-on-earth to become a reality. The bulk of the novel presents Billie's desperate attempts to evade death at the hands and mouths (remember, they can sing you to death in many gruesome ways) of the cultists, for having sung the Deathsong she is also the only person with the power to seal the breach it has opened. If she doesn't sing the Deathsong backwards at the gateway to the nether dimension within twenty-four hours of first singing the song, then the gods will come through. The action of the novel encompasses this one day, but several lengthy flashbacks, as well as a prologue set, add perspective to the fast-moving events.

Fast moving, at least, in the sense that the book spans only one action-filled day, but at times the pace bogs down to an annoying, double-slow motion crawl. A five-second knife attack takes nearly four pages. Here and in other scenes Borton appears to be writing a screenplay. And sometimes, when the pace is very fast indeed, odd descriptions jarringly intrude: "sunfishing" to describe the flopping motions of a bound or injured person; hearts "slamdancing" in chests; "egg yolk" spurring from punctured eyeballs. Aggravations like this appear many times.

But when Borton hits his stride, such as when a cultist loses his bound-to-for-life bracelet and devolves into a puddle of slime in a few seconds, or when a minion disappoints his boss and gets transformed into a living—but not for long!—maggot motel, he delivers the goods if it's squirm-in-your-seat disgust you're looking for.

The ancient cult is male-only. Billie Lee Kidd, the singer, is the only major female character in the book. There is a suggestion of misogyny in the novel which at times is more distasteful than the gruesome events in the foreground, most of which actually happen to men. Almost every cult member—to which most of the male population of southern California seems to belong—harbors an unbridled hatred of all women, and as Billie foils their attempts on her life, each is reduced to uttering the same ultimate insult: "You bitch!"

Don't look for much logic in all these goings on. While things in general make sense, the characters in *Deathsong* all behave exactly like characters in a bad mad-slasher movie, i.e. dumb. The police, of course, are the dumbest, such as when they decide Billie's report of finding her one-night-stand shot to pieces in her bed is just a typical case of feminine hysterics abetted by typical entertainer substance abuse. All the blood? That's just from where Billie accidentally cut herself, thus precipitating the hysterics. Yeah, right, about as right

as Billie climbing into bed with that freshly bullet-riddled corpse and not smelling anything odd before she reaches out in the dark to find....ugh. It may be gross, but it's not believable, and believability is what sustains a good horror novel.

Sometimes the details are just plain wrong. When the heroine, a singer, attributes the song "City of New Orleans" to

Woody Guthry—it was written by Steve Goodman and Arlo Guthry made it a hit—it's more than just the character showing her ignorance.

But in the long run it won't much matter, for scares and thrills of this variety don't really need much justification. Many people, having been exposed to too many bad movies, no longer even expect a reason for

AUDIO SF&F OF 1989

by Doug Fratz

There has never been a separate Hugo Award category for audio recordings, despite their many unique qualities and their existence in the field for many years. Although audio tapes are theoretically eligible in the "Dramatic Presentation" category, it seems unlikely that any recording will ever make the ballot over visually-oriented material such as movies.

In truth, based on quantity of superior material, a separate Hugo category is probably not yet warranted. Nevertheless, there continues to be a scattering of fine science fiction, fantasy and horror audio works produced year.

My choice for the best audio work of 1989 is *Eye of the Cat: The Story of Navajo Tracker Billy Blackhorse Singer* by Roger Zelazny (Lotus Press, Box 6265, Santa Fe, NM 87502, 290 min., \$24.95). This offbeat Zelazny novel, which explores Navajo mythology in a believable hard-SF milieu, is read brilliantly by Zelazny himself, with superior music and "ambient effects" supplied by Ray Griffin. If you only listen to one novel-length audio recording from last year, make it this one.

The other most important audio project of 1989 was three "best of 1988" short fiction audio anthologies, edited by Orson Scott Card and Martin H. Greenberg: *The Best Science Fiction Stories of the Year*, *The Best Fantasy Stories of the Year*, and *The Best Horror Stories of the Year* (Decum Audio, P.O. Box 1425, West Chester, PA 19380, 6 hrs.@, \$7@). It's a rare pleasure to hear well-done readings of top-quality fiction. The highlight of the SF volume is Pat Murphy reading her own "Rachel in Love," although the other stories, by Ian Watson, Ben Bova, George Alec Effinger, and two by Walter Jon Williams, are almost as good. The fantasy volume contained less superior material—the fantasy chosen here seems more often light-weight and/or derivative—with the best being Bruce Sterling's "The Little Magic Shop." The horror volume contained a surprisingly good selection of material, with very effective stories by Wayne Wightman, Lisa Tuttle, Howard Waldrop, Bruce D. Boston, James Patrick Kelly, and Ian Watson. I can only hope that this series will continue and prosper.

There were several other SF audio tapes worth noting produced in 1989. *The Toynbee Convector* by Ray Bradbury (Random House Audiobooks, 180 min., \$14.95) features five of the 23 stories from the 1988 anthology, all read nicely by Bradbury himself. *The Long Dark Tea-Time of the Soul* (Simon & Schuster Audioworks, 180 min., \$14.95) is Richard Adam's latest

spoof involving bumbling Norse Gods in modern England. *Centauri Express* (Centauri Co., 288 14th St., Suite 100, Atlanta, GA 30318, 60 min., \$8.95), SF's only audio "magazine," produced a third issue in 1989, with interesting fiction by Brad Linaweaver and Thomas Fuller, and several non-fiction features.

A final SF tape worth mentioning is *Tek War* by William Shatner (Simon & Schuster Audioworks, 180 min., \$14.95). Most literary SF fans and critics ignored this book as just another *Star Trek* tie-in, but it ends up being a surprisingly effective Chanderlesque hard-boiled detective story set in a reasonably believable 22nd Century decorated with some cyberpunk overtones. The plotting, pacing and prose are not bad at all. Did Shatner really write this himself?

It seems each year that more audio horror fiction is produced than SF. Some of the best tapes in the horror genre in 1989 were two new volumes in the *Prime Evil* series, edited by Douglas Winter—*Prime Evil: Secrets and Shadows* (Simon & Schuster Audioworks, 120 min., \$14.95) and *Prime Evil: Into the Darkness* (Simon & Schuster Audioworks, 150 min., \$14.95). These two volumes feature spine-tingling stories by Peter Straub, Charles Grant, Thomas Ligotti, Jack Cody and Whitney Streiber. Another notable entry in the horror genre is *Nightcrawler: Stories From the Blue World*, a collection of three tales by Robert R. McCammon (Simon & Schuster Audioworks, 180 min., \$14.95).

Also worth mentioning is *The Mummy - Or Ramses the Damned* by Ann Rice (Random House Audiobooks, 3 hrs., \$14.95) which isn't really horror, but rather a ludicrously overwritten story in the bodice-ripper romance novel style. Was this novel really a best-seller?

A final note for 1940s radio drama fans, and especially Sherlock Holmes fans: Simon & Schuster has begun to issue a series last year featuring *The New Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, which were the stories written for radio by Anthony Boucher and Denis Green, starring Basil Rathbone as Holmes and Nigel Bruce as Watson. The frame is a host interviewing a retired Dr. Watson in the present (1945-1946). Although the primary goal is nostalgia (the Petry wine commercials, worked into Watson's and the host's discussions in a manner shockingly crass by today's commercial standards, are carefully retained) these two stories, "The Case of the Limping Ghost" and "The Girl With the Gazelle" are fine adventures, despite the rigid 30-minute format for which they were written. ■

the monster to keep returning from the lake. Or, in *Deathsong*, why worry that the cultists don't keep their cuffs buttoned, when losing their bracelets, even accidentally, means instant death? One can't worry about something like that when it's obviously required for the scene where Billie grabs one of the bracelets, having been informed by the renegade cultist of what will happen...

Like a fun bad movie, *Deathsong* entertains, but don't expect "Turn of the Screw". Yet if *Deathsong* were a movie, Joe Bob Briggs would surely say, "Check it out."

THE CUCKOO'S EGG by Clifford Stoll
(Doubleday, 1989, 326 pp., \$19.95, ISBN: 9-385-24946-2)

Reviewed by Anthony Trull

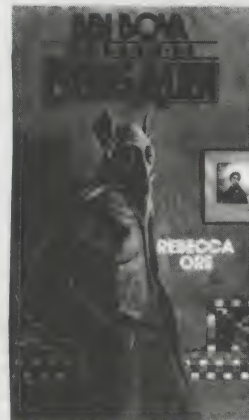
While not science fiction now, just a few years ago this book could have been, so quickly does the real world displace fantasy. Elements of this book echo current SF jargon, it's a suspenseful story, and it shows—real life and unintentionally—the development of one of SF's teachings. All of which make it worthy of your attention.

Clifford Stoll was an astronomer assigned to maintain Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory's computer systems when his research grant expired. Asked to track down a seventy-five cent accounting imbalance, he eventually discovered an unauthorized user gaining super-user privileges on his system. This was possible given ingenuity, patience, and computer skill because the scientific computers across the country are accessible by phone, and they are reasonably open to outside users to help the free exchange of information and resources. Stoll began tracking the activities of the intruder as he

routed his explorations through the lab's computers and into other installations, civilian and military. While trying for a long time to fully trace the calls and to interest law enforcement agencies ("Look, if you can demonstrate a loss of more than a million dollars, or that someone's been prying through classified data, then we'll open an investigation. Until then, leave us alone."), Stoll observed the hacker, interfering (by faking interference on the line) only a few times when it seemed the hacker—a very savvy computer-user—was about to cause damage. The story of the tracing and the slow tightening of the noose on the "Hannover Hacker" carries the reader along like the best spy thrillers.

The real world versions of science fictional jargon include "cyberpunk" and "the net." We have our cyberpunk movement, with its gloss of chrome, computer chip implants, and alienation, but in the world of scientific data networks, "cyberpunk" is a self-glorifying term for "hacker." And "the net," which we define as a world-wide information network really does exist—not as pervasive or as durable as in SF stories—but of greater extent than I aware.

It's the fragility of the network and the community of trust on which it is based, that is one of the lessons of this book. And Stoll's gradual realization of this and his sometimes uncomfortable acceptance of his responsibility for it, illustrate the frequent science fictional device where a character comes to understand himself as a citizen of the greater community. This is one of science fiction's strengths. It becomes more than casually important in today's world where the rules are stricter and stricter to define one of "us" and easier to dismiss one as "other" and beyond understanding.



BEING ALIEN by Rebecca Ore (Tor, 1989, 277 pp., \$3.95, ISBN: 0-812-54792-6)

Reviewed by Pascal J. Thomas

Tom, the Virginia hillbilly from Ore's previous (and first) novel, *Becoming Alien*, has now become a student at Karst's galactic university, majoring in first contact. It is best to have read the first book before reading this one, since Ore's accumulation of bird- and bat-like extra-terrestrials can be confusing, and Ore wastes little time in explanations.

Tom's problem, however, is now to pass a field examination in dealing with his own species, as he's sent on a mission to Berkeley. Might as well be another planet to him, but you should enjoy Ore's realistic, terse, and inventive description of this near-future background. Tom returns to Karst with assorted human family and friends, only to get into deeper water: he's socially inept as your average teenage SF fan, has little grasp of emotional responses, and has a terrible time dealing with women, or with other people. Worse yet, while humans are treated on Karst as an uncouth and disruptive underclass. Tom is sufficiently impregnated with the Galactics' value system to appear as an "Uncle Tom" to his kin.

The strengths of this novel are, as before, its imaginative strength and humor, but also the depth of the painful relationship between Tom and his addict of a brother. Another strength, Ore's brevity, can come across as a weakness too; while a great many plot turns and new directions are presented, they come so quickly that now and then I had the impression I was reading a condensed novel. We should be grateful to the author not to have diluted her wealth of ideas into a four-volume saga, as lesser writers would have; sometimes, though, I would have liked to slow down and tarry in more familiar territory, such as this admirable version of 1990's Berkeley.

H. P. LOVECRAFT, Peter Cannon (Twayne, 1989, 153pp., \$18.95, ISBN: 0-8057-7539-0)

Reviewed by Neil Barron

Although Cannon has proper academic credentials, including a masters from Brown, his pieces on HPL have appeared mostly in fan magazines such as *Lovecraft Studies*, *Crypt of Cthulhu* and similar eldritch journals. Cannon notes that few articles about HPL

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have appeared in mainstream academic journals. He addresses himself to two audiences, HPL buffs like himself, who he hopes "will find some fresh insights here, besides coming away with a renewed sense of how ripe the gentleman from Providence remains for analysis. Into the second category I put the nonfans—including most English professors—those who may think of Lovecraft as a second-rate, twentieth-century Poe but are open-minded enough to consider looking past the 'pulp' surface of his fiction. I hope this study will help persuade them that Lovecraft is more than a mere horror writer, that at the very least he deserves recognition as one of America's greatest literary eccentrics" (p. xi).

Cannon writes clearly, with humor and balanced judgments replacing the defensiveness typical of too many Lovecraft enthusiasts. His arguments gain credibility by his frequent admission that many Lovecraft fictions are deficient. This is important in a volume in the Twayne series, which is found almost exclusively in libraries.

Cannon's approach departs from Twayne's usual chronological one. The "other" works—journalism, travel pieces, letters, poetry—are discussed first to place the fiction in perspective. A chapter is devoted to the earlier apprentice fiction. Because of the crucial role of place in HPL's works a handful of chapters are arranged by dominant locale. A useful concluding chapter places Lovecraft in literary history. For many he is still invisible. Last year's *Columbia Literary History of the United States* has no mention of him. Although he is the subject of endless essays, they appear in sources regarded with suspicion by the academy. The annotated secondary bibliography is current (Joshi's excellent translation of Levy, 1988, is included) and his comments are judicious. There are chapter notes, and a good index. For someone knowing little of Lovecraft, Cannon is an excellent starting point.



WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN? Vol 1: ALTERNATE EMPIRES edited by Gregory Benford and Martin H. Greenberg (Bantam-Spectra, 1989, 291pp., \$4.50, ISBN: 0-553-27845-2)

Reviewed by Chuck Von Nordheim

I was disappointed in this first volume of a proposed series of anthologies built around the theme of alternate time-lines.

The editors responsible for the mess are master anthologist Martin H. Greenberg (the Elwood of the '80s) and Gregory Benford (who should know better).

It isn't a question of professionalism that does in *Alternate Empires*. The stories are all solidly written. The problem is that the ideas behind the stories are, for the most part, limp and unexciting. The mandatory sense of wonder has been replaced by a sense of mere competence.

Which is too bad, because if the market demands that bottom tier of the paperback rack be filled with generic high-concept anthologies, I'd much rather see the shelf space sucked up by *What Might Have Been* than in the endless regurgitations of *Thief's World* or Janet Morris's silly *In Hell* series. At least the theme of Greenberg's anthology did not insult my intelligence, even though many of the writers who contributed to this first volume managed to do so.

An article I read recently may explain the lackluster imagining exhibited in *Alternate Empires*. The piece bemoaned the historical ignorance rampant among today's crop of college seniors. Only a third of those sampled were able to identify Franklin Roosevelt as the U.S. President of the

Depression. Their knowledge of events prior to 1900 was even sketchier.

It could be that the writers represented in *Alternate Empires* were cynically well-aware of this fact. They didn't want to risk losing readers by focusing on obscure turning points of history—like, for example, a world where the Aryans failed to invade India. Instead they play it safe and deal in a broad, general way with events which even the most uninformed of their audience must have some glimmering of. The Fall of Rome. Jews and Jesus. The American Civil War. And very recent U.S. history.

Perhaps this kind of thinking is good for quickly generating fiction which has a high sales potential. But it also makes for a reading experience that is bland and unmemorable. This fastbuck mentality is also responsible for creating a volume which seems amazingly ethnocentric. After reading *Alternate Empires* one could come to the conclusion that the only important historical events happened in Europe and America.

Co-editor Benford's "We Could Do Worse," is probably the most heinous offender. He gives us a world in which McCarthy ended up President and suggests it might not be such a cool place to hang out.

"STORIES UNDER MY SKIN"

Short SF Reviews by Tony Trull

Much of the best science fiction and fantasy published each month is at less than novel length. The following are some reflections on some of the shorter SF published so far this year which have made a lasting impression.

"The Hemingway Hoax" by Joe Haldeman (*Asimov's*, April, 1990) tells the story of John Baird, a Hemingway scholar who, while on vacation in Key West, begins to consider (even before the prodding of his wife, Lena, and a con man named Castle) a hoax involving a box of Hemingway manuscripts known to have been lost in 1922. Could he create original manuscripts that could be plausibly argued to have come from that box? Baird begins to assemble the information and materials he will need for the hoax (such as finding a 1921 Corona typewriter).

Some super-human intelligences take note of the effect his activities will have on several time-lines, all of which are supposed to end in the thermonuclear destruction of our world in 2006. Somehow, the publication of fake lost Hemingway stories would change the course of a future wherein rising tides of machismo through the '90s lead to overplayed brinksmanship. The super-beings wish to prevent this deviation from doom in preservation of some larger scheme.

Baird begins writing a passably good "Hemingway" story called "Along With Youth," and one of the most powerful aspects of Haldeman's novella is Baird's gradual union with the spirit of Hemingway. The other powerful aspect is Baird's struggle with the super-being who always materializes in the guise of Hemingway. The struggle is fought across various time-lines to a bloody and confusing ending. Baird may

undergo a transformation, or a revelation, or a transference, or I may not have gotten it at all. There doesn't seem to be an answer to the oncoming nuclear death either.

The muddled ending is unfortunate in story otherwise so sharp and evocative of several characters, styles and times.

"Shatterwreck at Breaklight" by Terry Dowling (*F&SF*, March, 1990) is this author's first U.S. appearance, according to the magazine blurb, though he has been successful in Australia. If all of his stories are like this one, he will be successful in the U.S. as well.

This story's title and mood remind me of Samuel Delany's short stories of the late '60s—which in memory at least were colorful, fantastic and melancholy. Here we find a town named Twilight Beach, where men play fire chess, where sand-ships stop, and where a sailor can fall for a projected image, a "mirror woman." The price of her love is "shatterwreck," fragments of automobile wrecks which are sold like jewels now that autos have almost disappeared.

This is a moody story, an understated, simple story of a man foolishly loving a phantom, knowing he is foolish, but drawn irresistibly toward her. Excellent.

"A Braver Thing" by Charles Sheffield (*Asimov's*, February, 1990) is only glancingly SF; the story's strength is its reminiscence of an English boyhood spent in the joys of learning and science and friendship, of days at Cambridge as the boyhood friends grew apart, and of the final, gruesome understanding that the survivor gains upon investigating the former friend's suicide. The sense of true, textured remembrance is what keeps this story fresh in my mind. ■

Gosh, Greg, no shit.

Of course, not every story is without merit. James Morrow turns in some devastatingly hilarious attacks on Judeo-Christian morality in "The Covenant." It's part of his *Bible Stories for Adults* series, which has to be some of the most charmingly sacrilegious stuff since Ellison's "Deathbird." Karen Joy Fowler is the most interesting of SF's new voices. Her observations on male/female relationships in "Game Night At The Fox And Goose" are chilling.

The best is Frederick Pohl's "Waiting For The Olympians." Not only does it involve an alternate world, but Fred throws in a love story, a first contact scenario, and a main plotline about a writer trying to write that is so delightfully frothy that one would have thought it was written by Noel Coward. It almost seems that Pohl was giving the other writers in *Alternate Empires* free lessons on the sorts of things they should have been trying instead.

SCIENCE FICTION, FANTASY, AND HORROR REFERENCE by Keith L. Justice (McFarland and Co., 1989, 226 pp., \$27.50)
Reviewed by Dan Crawford

Some three hundred works of nonfiction on the SF & F field are discussed in this reference book under nine broad classifications: 1) General Histories, 2) Author Studies, 3) General Bibliographies, 5) Biographies, Autobiographies, Letters, Interviews, 6) Encyclopedias, Dictionaries, Indexes, Checklists, 7) TV, Film, Radio, 8) Comics, Art, Illustrations, and 9) Collections and Annotated Editions. (Of these, he notes that chapters 8 and 9 were peripheral to the main work, including just those items he came upon while working on the others. He might well have added chapter 7, which similarly scratches the surface of the available literature.) The bibliographical sections are followed by useful appendix and index material.

For each book, Justice lists bibliographical data, including different editions available, and whether there are differences between an earlier and a later edition. This is followed with a long paragraph of description and evaluation, giving the reader some idea of the scope and worth of the item discussed.

Justice avoids most of the ephemera that abounds in the field, preferring to discuss books that a serious student of science fiction, fantasy, and horror would find of interest. (Some ephemeral material does make it into the book, to be dismissed with such vituperation one wonders why it was included.) The vast majority of slick *sf* exploitation material is also ignored, though Justice shows no prejudice against what might seem ephemeral at first glance: for example, he declares *The Star Trek Interview Book* worthy of inclusion in a serious collection.

The major flaw in the bibliography is that it discusses only books from Justice's own collection, or items that he was able to examine while compiling the work. This has led to some omissions which are unfortunate, and some which are merely curious. Kingsley Amis's *New Maps of Hell* is mentioned, but does not get a listing of its own. Franz Rottensteiner is represented by *The Fantasy Book* but not *The Science Fiction*

Book. Who's Who in Science Fiction is listed, but not its companion volume, *Who's Who in Horror and Fantasy Fiction*.

Peter Haining and Lin Carter are each represented by one book apiece, while L. Sprague de Camp does not appear at all. It would also have been useful to have had at least a list of magazines publishing significant amounts of nonfiction in the field.

Nonetheless, the list does include plenty, including such things as Cliff's Notes. There are useful discussions of the body of work produced by publishers or authors specializing in science fiction and fantasy nonfiction, as well as observations on what is lacking in scholarship in the field. Anyone considering the collection of a basic reference library in any of the areas discussed here would do well to start here.



THE HEIRS OF HAMMERFELL by Marion Zimmer Bradley (DAW, 1989, 300 pp., \$18.95, ISBN: 0-88677-395-4)
Reviewed by Steven Sawicki

This *Darkover* novel takes place during the time of the hundred kingdoms; an age of war and strife. For *Darkover* fans this is enough to set the stage, for non-fans no amount of scene setting would prove adequate. Fortunately, one need not be a *Darkover* completist to enjoy this book.

The heirs in the title are twin sons of the Duke of Hammerfell, separated at infancy after their ancestral castle is set ablaze, their father killed and their mother forced to flee for her life. This act, part of a blood feud between the clans of Hammerfell and Storn, forever places its mark on the boys as they rise to manhood.

Conn, raised by a trusted family servant, remains on Hammerfell land, learning and eventually rising to keep the blood feud bloody. His brother, Alastair, having fled to and found sanctuary in Thendara City with his mother is raised in gentler surroundings. Yet both retain the rebuilding of their birthright as a primary goal.

The twist comes when Conn's *laran*, a psi-power, manifests itself and he must journey to Thendara. To say more would give away too much of the plot.

The writing is crisp and classic Bradley. The characters are well defined and if motivation is sometimes given over for story it's not enough to detract from what is essentially an entertaining read and the first addition to the *Darkover* saga in five years.



COUNTERPROBE by Carole Nelson Douglas (Tor, 1990, 344 pp., \$3.95; ISBN 0-812-53596-0)

Reviewed by Sharon E. Martin

Douglas is a superb storyteller, nudging her readers into that willing suspension of disbelief so necessary in good science fiction writing. I first encountered Douglas' work in *Probe* and, before I had finished reading the novel, was convinced that many of the alien-encounter stories at which I had scoffed were true. Of course, after the story was over, I was no longer so sure of what the truth was, but for a few hours...

Counterprobe begins where *Probe* left off. Kevin Blake and his patient, Jane Doe, have eluded the government agents who covet her powers. They have reclaimed her from the aliens who created her from a human cell and made her into a living probe. Still, they run, and *Probe* is thus a story of fugitives.

The government has called for the help of Dr. Eric Nordstrom in tracking and breaking Blake and his patient. Nordstrom is a villain almost too easy to hate, an evil man with no redeeming virtues. The government agent, Turner, on the other hand, is a well-rounded character. While you may loathe his single-mindedness, you can't help but be sympathetic to his sensitivity.

There are, too, the aliens who feel they made an error in releasing Jane and who wish to reclaim their rogue Probe. Their method of reclamation may be the most chilling aspect of this story.

An excellent tale, *Counterprobe* stands alone but is weakened, like too many sequels, by the repeat of basic material from the previous book. Despite that, the pages practically turn themselves, and the ending will intrude on your thoughts long after the story is over. ■

Send all letters of comment to: Thrust Publications, 8217 Langport Terrace, Gaithersburg, Maryland 20877 USA. Deadline for letters for publication in *QUANTUM* 38 is August 15, 1990.

Jack Williamson
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Portales, NM 88130

I've just read *QUANTUM* 36 cover to cover with considerable pleasure in the uncommon quotient of common sense in discussions of science fiction. Michael Bishop's piece on Sturgeon reminds me of an idea I've had about the origins of *More Than Human*. In my own novel, *The Humanoids*, published a few years earlier, a little group of social misfits with paranormal mental powers is gathered for the effort to stop the too-benevolent robots. Acting as a unit, these oddballs have more power than any one alone. I have always suspected that Sturgeon's *Homo Gestalt* was his own improvement on the same idea. The little girl in my group was named Jane; his is Janie. Though I never spoke to him about it, I have always imagined that her name must have been chosen as a gesture of credit to me.

Patricia Shaw Mathews
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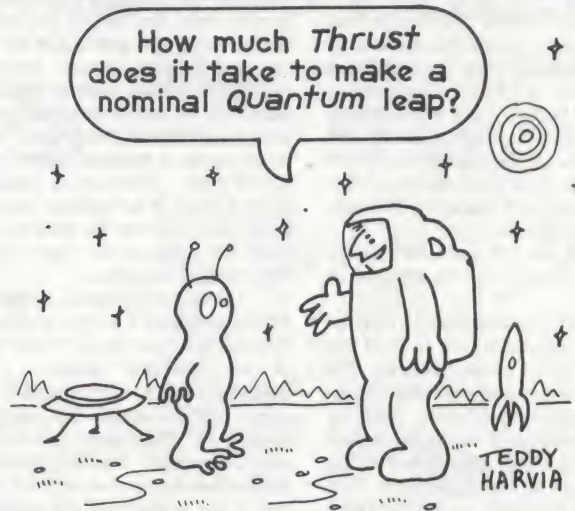
I was fascinated by Gene Wolfe's article on the difference between R. A. Lafferty and David Lindsay, especially his dissertation on the origins of the word "vulgar" and how much the peasant and the aristocrat are alike. Northern Abolitionist writers in the middle of the last century made the same point about the slave-holder and the slave, and were highly indignant about it. Most of them were from the town or city middle classes.

It's also intriguing to read Poul Anderson's tie-in through "No Truce With Kings." Feudalism—or its simpler brother, the stable chieftainship—is indeed one of the structures a fallen civilization can revert to. Another, even simpler, is the pattern of scattered, self-sufficient villages—which often grow into feudalism. For feudalism is not a simple form of organizing society; it's highly structured, and for its situation, well thought out. Again, like its predecessor, the village society, it will also give way to even more developed forms as society becomes more and more complex. Most republics seem to have gone through such a stage at one time. Not all.

But despite Wolfe's comment that the rural aristocrat lived too close to his horses, pigs, dogs, and cattle for prissiness, the difference doesn't seem to be a matter of city vs. country. Some of the most Krag-like people in the Western world are farmers. But they're either small independent farmers or agribusiness managers: they have the lifestyles, viewpoint, and outlook, again, of the middle classes.

The difference between the outlook of the middle classes and that of the aristocrat or peasant seems to be their attitude towards personal behavior, especially labor and following certain rules of conduct now heavily moralized. The middle classes whole

QUANTUM LEAPS



LETTERS

heartedly believed that what they did had a direct effect on how well they and their community lived.

It doesn't make much sense, otherwise, that the businessperson would preach the value of labor and suffering for their own sakes but not the aristocrat. After all, the duke would benefit greatly if the peasants believed it. But historically, the duke hasn't believed it—labor is for peasants—and the peasant hasn't bought it. Why did the factory worker and the sailor? Because it was felt to have some validity.

The classical aristocrats' well-being has no relationship to how hard they work; work is what the peasants do. The peasants' well-being has no relationship to how hard they work; the surplus only goes to the overlord anyway.

But the entrepreneur, the small farmer, the hourly worker, the pieceworker, and anyone who has paid for their labor in any way could see a direct cost-benefit relationship. So they incorporated it into their moral values, as Heinlein's Lorenzo points out in *Double Star*: "... moral for men and for Martians. Building on the square and on the level. An honest day's work for an honest day's pay ..." (and vice versa.)

Lindsay's Krag, of course, illustrates beautifully Wolfe's introduction to this theme. "For all vices, even the worst, are exaggerations—overdoings of some legitimate thing."

That quote is going into my private notebook of quotations (Kipling's old 'copybook') to keep forever.

Chuq Von Rospach
SFWA Nebula Awards Administrator
1072 Karen Way
Mountain View, CA 94040

I like the new look of *QUANTUM*, now that the renaming has happened. Good

material and I'm enjoying each issue that arrives. Keep up the good work.

I wanted to clarify a couple of things about Nancy Etchemendy's article on the Nebula Award Jury. Some of the problems she brought up have already been addressed—one major change that was made in 1989 (the year after she was on the Jury) was splitting the jury into two. We now have one jury focusing on novels and one on short fiction, each with five members.

This seems to make the load on jury members significantly less onerous: we had a number of members volunteer for a second term, which I don't believe has happened before.

Her other major criticism, the short period of eligibility for some works, is an area that SFWA has been working on for at least two years. There is currently a proposal before the membership to change some of the Nebula rules to make them more fair and fix the eligibility period. It is, it turns out, harder to fix the awards than it is to decide they need to be fixed, and a lot of thought has to go into changes to make sure we aren't creating new, worse problems.

To her recommendation for a juried Nebula award, as many good arguments can be made against juried awards as can be made against voted awards like the Nebula. Neither system is perfect, and a juried system doesn't have the advantage of having a large number of members to help ferret out and evangelize obscure works while keeping all of the things that made being on the Jury unpleasant for Nancy. Doesn't seem like a good tradeoff to me.

Mark W. Tiedemann
4325 S. Grand
St. Louis, MO 63111

Ronald Anthony Cross's essay about science fiction and fantasy was certainly informative—what everyone, I think needs

occasionally is a cold dose of reality, especially in the face of a world retreating toward mysticism—but, basically, misguided, if not disingenuous.

If, as Mr. Cross implies, the debate was really over a question of whether we are all writing a form of fantasy, then I doubt there would be a debate. All fiction, by such a broad definition, is fantasy. But if you intend to use that definition to assert that, really, the works of Harold Robbins and Philip Roth and Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. are no different from each other, then you are bending the language to the breaking point.

But that's not, as I'm sure Mr. Cross knows perfectly well, what the debate is about at all.

I say disingenuous because Mr. Cross has used a cheap debaters trick to load the argument in his favor at the outset. He claims science-fiction writers take themselves too seriously. Any attempt, then, to defend science fiction in a serious context will simply strengthen that assertion and, by default, lend weight to his argument. Not fair. You paint a portrait of dour-faced science fiction writers on one side of the chamber glaring spite and invective at the capering, Pan-faced fantasy writers on the other side. That is not the nature of the debate either.

Certainly all fiction is entertainment. Certainly people read it for escape. Certainly fiction that fails to accept or simply ignores those two realities is balefully tedious.

But after these considerations, to then assert that fiction does not have other uses and—dare I say it?—responsibilities is fallacious and dangerous. If you accept that fiction has "deeper" purposes, "higher" potentials—to, in other words, accept that *War and Peace*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *The Dispossessed* do more than simply entertain—then you must realize that all forms are not fitted to discuss all things with equal capacity. Different forms of fiction deal with those potentials differently.

And that is what the debate is really about. It is a debate over forms and ideologies. And since Mr. Cross chose to accuse science fiction of being a "particularly dangerous form of fantasy" then let's talk about pots calling kettles black.

Mr. Cross raised the issue of Relativity. Fine. In science fiction, Einstein, Relativity, physics in general, all have a forum for discussion. The stories—even stories in which these laws are bent or broken—at the very least assume the existence of a universe in which these subjects are worth discussing. (I'm not sure I need point out that, at the better end, these subjects provide a focus point for speculating on what the universe might be like if we *could* "beat them.") In most fantasy, however, there's no place for the discussion and it would be irrelevant anyway because fantasy deals with universes in which physical law is broken constantly with no rationale other than the "power gift" possessed by an elite group who, because Nature has so "gifted" them, may live divorced from causality and, ultimately, casuistry.

To put it more simply, science fiction is usually predicated on discussions about systems and their interrelationships. Fantasy cares nothing for systems, other than the pre-ordained "order of the universe" the particular writer is interested in supporting.

Science fiction accepts and even advocates a pluralistic world view. Fantasy is, by and large, homogeneous, aristocratic, and dogmatically reactionary, mostly white, mostly male, and mostly monotheistic (not in the sense of one god but in the sense of only one "true" religious view). While a great deal of science fiction depicts fascist societies, it aggressively keeps the field open to different orders, different ideological systems, and often admits a political dialectic implicit in its world view. Fantasy is usually a fascist monologue. It advocates hierarchical world orders founded on the idea that the universe itself will support the "right" side of the conflict. End of dialectic.

(As for wife beaters, fantasy, I think, has little to support a contrary view. Women in fantasy who are "heroic" tend not to be part of the "natural" order. They stand outside—rather than above—the social order, and are usually not permitted to participate in it. They don't get to have families and be heroes. You might almost say that they're basically men without testicles. The rest of the women are still cooking, cleaning, harvesting, and being screwed in support of the community, never permitted to be "heroes" of any sort. The male counterparts of the female hero get to become king or at least get a house in the country and a female as reward.)

Now, Mr. Cross, which would you say is the more dangerous of the two? One that takes discussions of systems seriously and fosters an atmosphere of pluralism, or one that coyly, dimple-cheeked in its playful self-effacement, supports a world view that *did* in fact go the way of the Flat Earthers?

But there I have gone and been too serious. After all, we are only discussing fiction, and fiction, as we all know, is really pretty harmless and shouldn't be taken seriously at all.

Rory Harper
422 W. 15th St.
Houston, TX 77008

Just a quick note here—Many thanks to you and Chuck Von Nordheim for your publication of his more-than-kind review of *Petrogypsies*. Most first novels by obscure authors exist for three weeks on the newsstands, unnoticed, and then vanish as if they'd never existed, but I've been delighted with the reviews *Petrogypsies* has received (not that there have been *that* many).

Incidentally, I also agree with Von Nordheim that "Sprocket Goes Offshore" drags a bit. I probably spent more time trying to get that part honed down than any other, and still didn't feel that I got it quite right.

On the name change—you're not faunching for respectability, or anything like that there, I hope? *QUANTUM* is a fine name, and if I'd come upon it cold, I wouldn't twitch a bit, but when I saw it, it reminded me of Andy Porter's changing *Algol* to *Starship* in order to become more mainstream. We all know what happened shortly after. I hope you're not moving toward blandness here. I have all of the *THRUSTs*, and I always enjoyed their unique voice.

[This magazine has evolved slowly and continuously over the years, and that proc-

ess will continue. The name change does not signify a coming revolution. As for Andy Porter's change from *Algol* to *Starship*, I really don't think the name change had anything to do with that magazine's demise. It just happens to have always been true that a monthly newsmagazine/trade journal has a change as a commercial venture in the SF field, while a critical review/feature journal does not. Meckler Corporation learned that the hard way, buying *Fantasy Review*. - DDF]

Jeffrey Kasten
10 Niblock Court
Albany, NY 12206

I went back to *THRUST* 24 after reading Phyllis Eisenstein's letter [in Q36]. Some of your quandaries I agree with—notably why McIntyre and Randall weren't Campbell nominees. In McIntyre's case, I suspect the lack of well-placed stories in 1974 was the cause. (She probably did get some short stories published that year, but I can't think of any offhand.)

One of the reasons why so many of the writers in your Campbell Non-Nominees Table (#3) didn't get nominated is that they weren't eligible. Connie Willis' first story was "Santa Titicaca" in the winter 1970-71 *Worlds of Fantasy* (issue #3). Greg Bear's first story was "A Martian Ricorso" in the February 1976 *Analogue*. (This was one I wrote to you about at the time.) William Gibson's first story was "Fragments of a Hologram Rose" in the Fall 1977 issue of *Unearth* (#3). And finally, Donald Kingsbury would have been horrified to get a Campbell Memorial nomination shortly after his first story was published, since it was "Ghost Town," in the June 1952 issue of *Astounding*.

Just to show that I've been burned, too, when I filled out a Hugo ballot in 1980 I nominated Lee Killough for the Campbell, having been enthralled by her first novel. I later found out her first sale was in 1970.

The picture of James Morrow makes him look like a hunchbacked version of Aqualung. What a horrible shot!

I'm amazed you printed Lee Smith's letter without comment. "America's faith in immutable scientific progress remains unshaken and boundless"? Since when? Relatively intact, perhaps, but unshaken? Also, "most environmentalism has had its fraudulence exposed and been forsaken"? That's news to me. If environmentalists are frauds, maybe we shouldn't have bothered asking Exxon to clean up its oil spills. Or care if rivers catch fire. Does thinking we should make me a fanatic? Instead of discrediting it, the events of the past 20 years have put moderate environmentalism firmly into the political mainstream.

[I let Lee Smith's diatribe go without comment to see what debate it stirred up. Also, I deal with environmental issues for a living, and have seldom felt a strong desire to address those issues here as well. - DDF]

Richard Chwedyk
7538 North Bell
Chicago, Illinois 60645

Oops! Sharon Martin [in *THRUST* 35] is too gracious. I completely missed the typo

to which she referred, and ultimately the humor of her remark. With her reply to my letter providing the context, I can see why her Oklahoman blood was set to simmer by the use of "Oakie" in Foster's book (a reference, no doubt, to Mr. Jack Oakie, the thirties comedian who appeared with W. C. Fields in *Million Dollar Legs* and with Charlie Chaplin in *The Great Dictator*). The fault is all mine, but please see my remark on copy editing . . . and my remark about writing something embarrassing that gets into print (but with John Shirley referring to Maryland as a "landlocked" state, I shouldn't worry).

I love the new typeface and layout. It's not conspicuously different, but cleaner and easier to read. You packed much more material into the same space and, as always, very interesting material. I look forward to more Poul Anderson columns, Charles Sheffield's reminiscences were often amusing and I wonder if Martin Caidin might be a character who escaped from a Robert Heinlein novel. Heinlein's spirit seems to be hovering everywhere these days, which I suppose proves Anderson's point about his contributions surpassing those of all the various "waves" that have washed over us.

Ian Watson fared well with what must be a difficult and often tedious task. The problem seems to be the form itself. Reading a review of a year's worth of writing in some ways resembles the sort of speedreading to which fiction is impervious, blurring details in a form that trades in details. Mr. Watson provides enough insights to raise his piece above the usual obligatory journalistic "round-up." There are certain observations he makes which are worthy of complete essays. I turned this sentence over in my head several times: "It possesses the sort of fundamental irreality figuring in stories written by children still ignorant of the ways of the world." The subjective/objective relationships suggested by that one sentence sets up an excellent context with which to review Lucius Shepard's work, and the process of fiction itself. Then again, I may read an essay with just such a premise in *NYRSF* and wish I hadn't.

One practice I would like to see more often in book reviews is the use of quotes and passages from the work being reviewed. It often gives the reader of the review a better idea of the flavor of the book and of the author's way of writing. Obviously, the practice can be abused, but in the hands of a good reviewer it can do more than the best paraphrase or interpretive sentence, as well as speaking to the admonition for all writers—book reviewers included—to show the reader rather than tell the reader what is right/wrong with a particular book.

By the way, I like the new name. *QUANTUM* 36 looks better than ever, except that the cover reminds me a little of the last few issues of *Starship*. The content gets better and better. The James Morrow interview was interesting. "I even subscribe to *THRUST*." The sacrifices one must make for art!

I think that you found the correct word for some of Delany's criticism: impenetrable. Which is not to say that I don't admire Delany's writing, including some excellent pieces of criticism, but at times I get the feeling he's deliberately muddying the waters—for some sublime purpose, no

doubt, but the muddying has the effect of leaving me behind as he sails on to whatever goal he's set upon.

Gene Wolfe's piece on Lafferty was entertaining. He very nearly hit the nail on the head in trying to describe the appeal of Lafferty's writing—nearly. However, I don't think anyone else could have hit that particular nail any more squarely, and I want to thank Wolfe for that quote from Thoreau.

There's so much cleverness roaming about these days that it's becoming remarkable to find even a scrap of intelligence, and wisdom is often more than we can hope for. Thanks for providing me with such a bounty of intelligent work.

Taras Wolansky
Clay Hill Rd.
Kerhonkson, NY 12446

I wonder if the difference Darrell Schweitzer sees between the old *Star Trek* and the new can simply be accounted for by the changes in liberalism between the mid-sixties and the late eighties.

Twenty-five years ago liberals were still self-confident interventionists in foreign and domestic policy. Presidents Kennedy and Johnson had just given us their noble crusade in Vietnam. But part of the fallout of that crusade was a sea-change in the liberal world-view. Thereafter any foreign policy difficulties were to be considered either misunderstandings between the US and its opponents, or the fault of the United States (i.e., also misunderstandings, but of a different kind). If every international enmity is nothing but a misunderstanding, then we can easily see why a lot of *Next Generation* stories end with the menace turning out not to have been a menace after all.

This game of attacking motives that Avedon Carol plays is a two-edged sword. Some "pro-choice" people support abortion because they want to slow the growth of the black population. (Blacks in the U.S. have twice as many abortions as whites.) One "pro-choice" doctor even dreams of going down to Mexico and establishing abortion clinics there, to keep the U.S. from being "flooded."

"Forced pregnancy is indistinguishable from slavery"? If by "forced pregnancy" one refers to a pregnancy that resulted from rape, it is hard to disagree with this; or even if it refers to a total unavailability of contraception, Rumanian-style.

But "forced pregnancy" if a woman didn't bother to use contraception? "Forced pregnancy" if a woman simply changed her mind? (Even if you do change your mind, I have never heard being required to live up to a contract or agreement, freely entered into, called "slavery.") "Forced pregnancy" if you really wanted a boy so you desire to abort a female fetus?

Carol claims that the fact a woman chooses to have an abortion proves that her pregnancy's consequences would otherwise be "pretty horrible." This ludicrously flimsy argument only shows how weak is the case for unrestricted abortion. Possibly there are a few women who have abortions because, for them, the prospect of bearing a child is "pretty horrible"; but for the vast majority who have children after, or before, or between abortions, the issue is the right time, or the

right man, or the right number.

That Carol is seeing former anti-abortion demonstrators coming in for abortions doesn't surprise me. It is human nature to rationalize anything, absolutely anything that is in one's self-interest, whether it be abortion, or theft, or aggressive war, or slavery.

Slavery is a good example: early in the history of the American republic, many slave owners opposed slavery, in theory. But later, when abolition became a real possibility, they "discovered" just how moral and natural slavery really was. Interestingly, in the wake of the Supreme Court decision weakening *Roe v. Wade*, we see exactly the same process working its way through the American electorate!

It would appear that, to most Americans, abortion is morally repugnant but very, very convenient. You might say, on this issue almost everyone is a "slave-owner."

Brian Earl Brown
11675 Beaconsfield
Detroit, MI 48224

After the very long introduction to the Martin Caidin interview [in *THRUST* 35] I feel it very important to know who Thomas N. Hackney is and who he was writing for when he did this interview. The man seems as much publicity flack for Caidin as interviewer. Caidin himself is no piece of cake. The man comes across as so full of himself that I wouldn't trust him to walk my dog.

While I look forward to Poul Anderson, the author, writing for fanzines again, I don't give a rat's ass about this Poul Anderson, political agitator.

Avedon [Carol] gives good answer to the question of woman's rights versus fetal rights, though I'm sure you don't want to get into the abortion debate. But there is a science-fictional aspect to this. Avedon asked, "once you start granting fetuses the right to use other people's organs against their will, where does it stop?" Isn't this the situation in *The Handmaid's Tale*, a book I've always disliked because the situation seemed impossible to have evolved from our society? But Avedon's question reminded me that a Michigan woman is being prosecuted for "delivering drugs to a minor" because cocaine was detected in her blood during her baby's delivery. If smoking crack when pregnant can get you arrested for drug dealing, how long before pregnant crack addicts get locked up "for their own good," or all pregnant women be tested for drug use, and what about alcohol use or caffeine consumption? If this case stands, it might eventually mean that pregnant women will be incarcerated—for their own good—deprived of civil liberties because their womb is in use. This may seem far fetched but the War on Drugs in this country has seen a tremendous trampling of personal liberty with no end in sight. It's not something we can discount out of hand.

We Also Heard From:

Monica Sharp and Dave Garcia, who like the magazine sans envelope, especially sans plastic envelope.

Sam Moskowitz, who thought the material in Q36 was good, but finds the small type uncomfortable to read even with a high-powered magnifying glass....

Jeff Summers, who thinks *QUANTUM* looks even better than *THRUST*, despite the missing pages in his copy....

William L. Clovis, M.D., who just read Sheri Tepper's novel, *Grass*, was impressed, and hopes Q will feature one of our long interviews with her. [Hear that interviewers?]

Tom Hackney, who (commenting on Martin Caidin's desire for commercialism in space) sends a 2/12/90 *Wall Street Journal* story on the first Russian space mini-factory.

Ronald Anthony Cross, who enjoyed both Q36 and the check for his article in it.

David Transue, who thinks we've made a quantum leap in quality and appearance.

Jane C. Rymer, who enjoyed her slightly-nicked copy of Q36, found the letters stir argumentative thought, but appears to have experienced *commentus interruptus* before she could complete her letter....■

Staff News

Poul Anderson's *The Shield of Time* will be published by Tor in August. His *The Boat of a Million Years* is a Book of the Month Club alternate, and a Nebula and Hugo nominee.

David Bischoff's *Abduction: The UFO Conspiracy* is now available from Warner.

Michael Bishop's "The Ommatidium Miniatures" is a Nebula finalist in the short story category. Michael is working on a novel, *Count Geiger's Blues*, which he describes as satirical quasi-SF, and he is editing the 25th Anniversary *Nebula Awards* anthology for Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. *Nebula Awards 24*, which he also edited, was released in April.

George Alec Effinger's novella, "Marid Changes His Mind," is a Nebula finalist in that category. It was originally published in the May issue of *IASFM*. His novel, *A Fire In The Sun*, is out in paperback from Bantam.

The premier issue of the new *Science Fiction Review* contains an interview of Richard Geis by Elton Elliot, along with a short story by Geis. He will be editing (with comment) the *SFR* letter column in the second issue, due out in July. He has also now published two issues of *The Geis Letter*, an 8-page review/letter zine for the "inside" crowd of SF, fantasy, and horror.

Nancy Hayes attended the *CONTACT* conference in March in Phoenix where two teams, isolated from one another, propagated terrestrial society to a preset future date and created an alien society. *CONTACT* is a non-profit educational and scientific corporation. For more information, write: Jim Funaro, Dept. of Anthropology, Cabrillo College, Aptos, CA 95003.

Darrell Schweitzer sold *Transients & Other Strange Travelers*, a collection of stories, to Weirdbook Press. His story, "Short and Nasty," will appear in *Obsessions* from Dark Harvest, and "The Throwing Suit," written with Jason van Hollander, has been sold to *Horror Show*. "Going to the Mountain" will be part of an anthology from Broken Mirrors Press. "Soft" was in the Spring 1990 issue of *Weird Tales*, and "The Cloth Gods of Zhamir" and "The Unmaker of Men" will appear in future issues.

Tony Trull has submitted his manuscript for a science-fiction novel to Baen. Good luck, Tony.■

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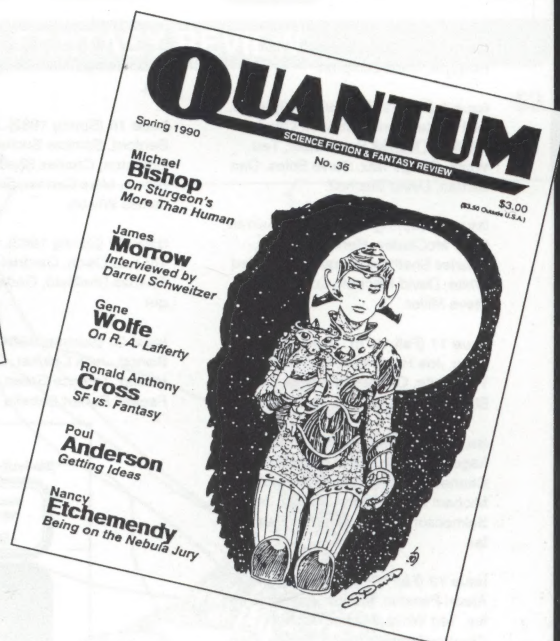
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